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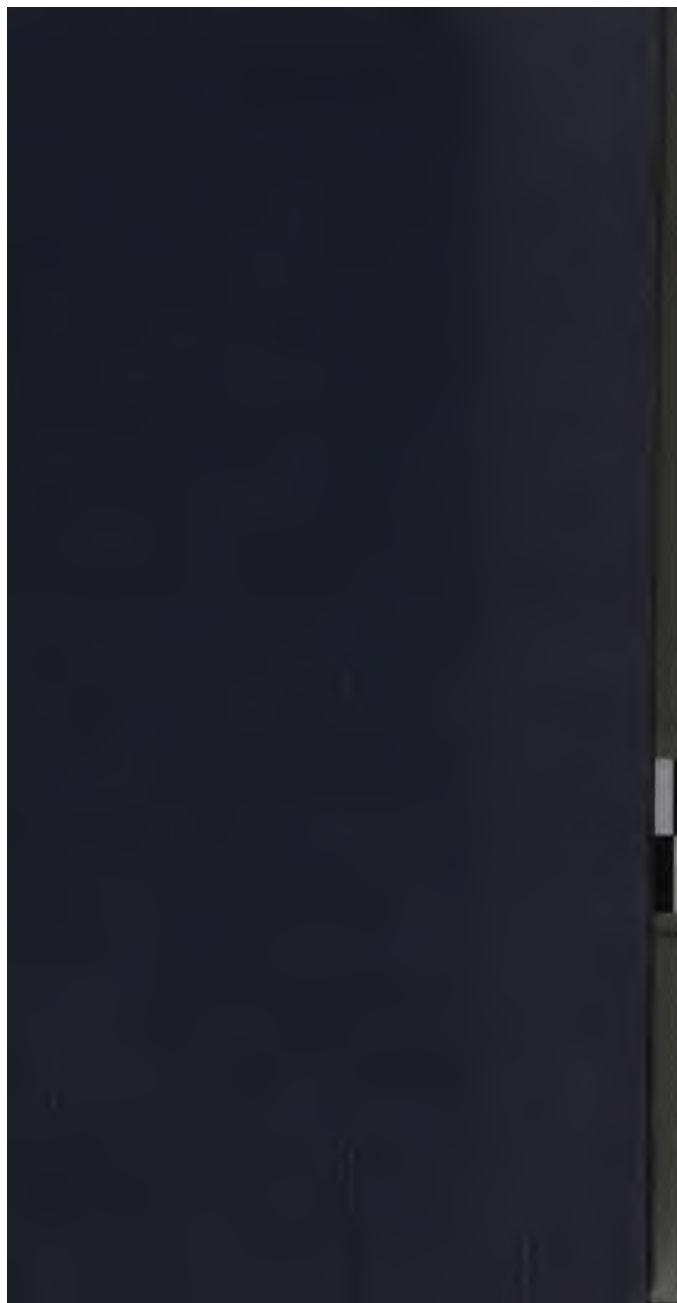
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DISCUSSION

ON THE

EXISTENCE OF GOD

AND THE

AUTHENTICITY OF THE BIBLE.

BETWEEN

ORIGEN BACHELER

AND

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

Let Truth and Falsehood grapple. Who ever knew Truth put to the worse
in a free and open encounter?—*Milton*.

2 London:

JAMES WATSON, 3, QUEEN'S HEAD PASSAGE,
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TO THE READER.

EVERY individual should be a friend to free inquiry. If he holds the truth, he should urge inquiry, because that *promotes* truth; if he holds error, he should still court inquiry, because that tends to *expose* error; and surely it is desirable to be reclaimed from error, inasmuch as a belief in that, however agreeable, will not make it truth. But free inquiry consists not merely in the perusal of works favourable to our own views, thereby confirming ourselves in our preconceived opinions. It consists in the full examination of *both* sides of a question. No subject is thoroughly investigated, and settled on an immoveable basis, till it has been assailed at every point, and has met and repelled its assailant in his full strength; till on it the belligerents have met, and measured swords, and done their mightiest; for it is expecting quite too much of one of the parties, to suppose that he will do the other's fighting as *bloodily* as he would himself. It is, therefore, not in the nature of the case, that the controvertist who treats on a subject alone, how fairly soever he may represent the side which he opposes, will have so warm a battle, as if that side were in the field. He will indeed answer opposing arguments, but he will not answer himself. He cannot *feel* as an opponent would, and therefore his wits will not be sharpened, and his invention strained, as would the other's to *create* objections and obstacles, and to throw the last possible missile. Indeed, it were desirable that the champion of truth have always an opponent, to produce all manner of difficulties for him to obviate, instead of having them afterwards advanced unanswered, to the annoyance, and, perhaps, the discomfiture of others less prepared for the encounter. Error defeated in her full strength, is effectually defeated. Crippled and disabled, she lies supine; and over her prostrate form, the veriest invalid, who never dared the mighty conflict, can safely peal the notes of victory. But let her off with a passing defeat; suffer her to escape with her legions armed, broken and scattered though they be, and she will rally again her strength, and fall on the defenceless when their champion is withdrawn from the scene of action.

No man who merely reads a controversial work written by one of the parties, reads thoroughly on the subject; nor is he fully qualified by that course of reading to defend a cause. Were he to grapple with an antagonist, he would find, with all his con-

his controversial lore, new objections to meet, and new arguments to answer;—for which, unless he were himself a master, he would find he were inadequate. But the *principal* advantage in sending into the world both sides of a controversy in connection, lies in this: that those on the erroneous side will thereby be induced to read what truth has to say in her own behalf, and that too in her own words. This is a desideratum, and one too which this measure alone can secure. Every reasonable man must certainly prefer the full investigation of a question to a partial one; and surely the investigation is more thorough where both sides speak for themselves, than where one of the parties speaks for both. Here, then, we find, at last, the means of obviating that great difficulty so generally the subject of complaint, viz.: that errorists will not examine the evidences in favour of truth. In this way they *will* examine them. Certainly they cannot object to reading their own arguments in their own words. And the circumstance that the arguments of the opposite side are attached to them, ought to be no objection; for every one should be willing to give a subject a fair examination, by hearing both sides. And as far as the cause of truth is concerned, the sending out of both sides in connection, so far from being an objection, is so much the better; for, in this way, direct replies are furnished to those arguments; so that, although the reader sees the arguments in favour of error, he likewise sees their counteraction at the same time. The abettors of error will scatter abroad their arguments at any rate; and surely it is better, seeing they will thus scatter them, to have them go out in connection with their antidote, than to go alone. Nor need the friends of truth be afraid to have *their* arguments and evidences sent into the world in such a connection; for, “though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to ply upon the earth, so truth be in the field, we do injuriously to misdoubt her strength. Let her and falsehood grapple. Who ever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?”

Some there are who, in view of all these things, are ready to exclaim, What good does all this do? They might as well ask what good it does to give the reasons and evidences of a thing. *They* must be very *unreasonable* who object to *reasoning*. Yea, so impracticable is their theory on this point, that, ere they are aware, they find themselves warmly engaged in controversy against controversy, and striving to give *reasons* why men should *not* reason? But whom do we convince, ask they. Let them apply their rule throughout, and ask whom lawyers and witnesses convince; whom the speakers in the legislature and in Congress convince. And then let them tell us whom they themselves convince *without* argument and evidence. And, after having done this, let them, in order to be consistent, give not one reason why we should not reason, but permit us to take our own course without interruption.

Others are ready to ask, "Of what consequence is it whether these things are so or not?" Of very great consequence indeed. And so judge others, as appears by the voluminous writings both of Christians and sceptics. Religion is the all-important thing, or else it is a gross imposition on mankind. In either case, it is not an indifferent concern. If it is true, it ought to be maintained; if false, overthrown. Hence, both Christians and sceptics act a more rational part in the interest which they manifest in relation to the subject, than do your Gallios, who "care for none of these things."

The discussion which appears in this volume, was originally carried on in the columns of the New-York Free Enquirer. It is now republished, with emendations and an appendix and table of contents, and sent out into the world to take its own course, and meet such a reception as mankind shall see fit to give it.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

[Robert Dale Owen's Address to the Reader forms the Introduction to the Second Volume of this Discussion.]

EXISTENCE OF GOD

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN

LETTER I

New-York, January 22, 1831.

SIR,

Though a believer in the Christian religion myself, I am nevertheless a friend to reason and free inquiry. Indeed, so far am I from thinking that men ought to admit Christianity, *or any* thing else, without evidence, that I should be among the first to reprehend such blind faith. To me there is nothing terrific in the idea of free inquiry; for, without such inquiry, there cannot be a full and fair investigation of subjects. And the *more* free it is, the better for the cause of truth; for the more plainly will that be manifested. The Christian, therefore, so far from shrinking from discussion, should be among the foremost to promote it, as an effectual means of advancing what he considers to be all-important truths.

But while, on the one hand, it is not free inquiry, to refuse to examine the evidences in favour of scepticism; on the other, it is not free inquiry, to refuse to examine the evidences of Christianity. Those sceptics who rail against the Bible, and who read only their own side of the question, are as great bigots, and as little entitled to the name of free inquirers, as are those Christians who rail against scepticism, and read only the arguments in favour of Christianity. Those only are free inquirers, and reasonable men, who fully examine subjects, and believe according to the evidence which such an examination furnishes. Wherefore, to ascertain whether a man is a free inquirer or not, we are not to ask whether he is a Christian or a sceptic; but whether he fully examines subjects. I do therefore object to the *monopolizing* of this title by sceptics.

This premised, I am now prepared to enter on a free and a full examination of the evidences in relation to the existence of God, and the authenticity of the Bible. These questions I conceive to be of the highest importance; because, if there is a God, it is reasonable to suppose we are accountable to him; and if the Bible is true, it is fatal to reject it. It is therefore a plain dictate of *reason itself*, that we should candidly and thoroughly examine these subjects, prepared to follow whithersoever the evidences which on investigation may arise shall

lead. Most assuredly, it cannot be to our interest to be deceived on these points; for if there is a God, and if the Bible is true, our *disbelieving* therein will not alter the case. Let us therefore, like rational creatures, calmly approach these subjects, not to *overthrow* or *upbuild* this, that, or the other, but to *examine*, to *investigate*, to *see how things are*. This is the way to "prove all things;" but prejudice and bias *prevent* proof.

First, then, let us examine the question of the existence of God. And let us consider ourselves equally interested, not to make out our respective theories, but to ascertain whether there is a God or not. I repeat it: Let it be our object to arrive at the truth, and not to vanquish each the other.

The proper inquiry on this point seems to be: Is there reason, *all things considered*, for *believing* that there is a God—an intelligent cause of things, infinite and perfect in all his attributes and moral qualities.

When we behold the misery and wickedness abroad in the earth, we very naturally inquire, "Could a being of infinite goodness and power permit such things? Had we the power, we would not permit them." Hence, some conclude at once that there can be no God. But this is certainly a hasty conclusion, because it is formed without full examination. If, in examining a subject, we see difficulties on the one side, we should examine further, and see whether there are any on the other. And if, after having fully examined the case, we find difficulties on both, we should compare them, and see which are the greater, and adopt that side which has the less.

In the case before us, there is at first sight an apparent difficulty as to the existence of God, in the circumstance of the existence of sin and misery. But this difficulty rises from a partial consideration of the divine attributes. The sceptic, in making this objection, brings but two of these into view, viz., *goodness* and *power*, not once considering that the exercise of both is regulated by *wisdom*. But then again he inquires, "How can there even be wisdom in the permission of sin and misery?" Were we omniscient, perhaps we could see: but, limited as we are in knowledge, we are at least *unauthorized* to say that their permission is *unwise*. This we cannot *know*, without infinite wisdom. We cannot *be sure*, therefore, that what seems in this instance an objection to the divine existence, is in reality so. Yet this, I believe, is the great reason for atheism.

Now I must confess that, on *due* consideration, this very reason, which atheists consider an objection to the existence of a God, is to me an argument in its favour. Were all things in accordance with the limited wisdom of man, there would be reason to suppose that they were not contrived by wisdom *superior* to his, and, consequently, that they were not contrived by *infinite* wisdom, and, therefore, that there is no infinite wisdom—no *God*. To illustrate this, take the case of a child. His knowledge being less than that of a man, he acts, in some

cases, differently from a man. And where we can see nothing but works similar to those of children, there is reason to suppose that men did not do them. So, if the universe were in accordance with the views of men, it would be reasonable to suppose that it was not contrived by infinite wisdom. I do therefore consider the *apparent* imperfection of things a strong argument in proof of the existence of God, instead of being an objection against it.

I will not enter further into the subject at this time: suffice this for the opening of the discussion.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

TO ORIGEN BACHELER.

LETTER I.

January 29, 1831.

I accede to the proposed discussion, in hopes that it may be conducted with earnestness and candour. All discussions so conducted subserve the interests of truth.

Far am I from objecting to your definition of a *free inquirer*. If I have considered myself entitled to the character, it is assuredly not because I may happen to believe a little less, or a little more, than my neighbours: but solely because I feel that I am disposed to seek truth, wherever it may be found; within the pale of orthodoxy or without it; in religion or in scepticism; under the form of popular virtue or of moral heresy; in the histories of all ranks as of all countries. My single object is, not to find truth in this creed or in that system—not in the code of one country or the customs of another, but, wherever it be, to find it.

It is idle in me to profess sincerity. The most careless observer must perceive that I *can* have no motive but an honest one for adhering to opinions which bring me neither riches, honour, a good name, nor any worldly advantage, except that invaluable one, the pleasant consciousness of being free to follow the dictates of conscience, unbiassed and unshackled.

You will find me disposed to plain dealing. I will never *choose* to misunderstand you. I will quibble at no words, beg no question, take refuge behind no sophism, and evade no encounter. Thus, perhaps, time and temper may be saved to both of us. But enough of professions.

The first question regards the existence of a God.

I perceive no evidence whereby to affirm or deny that one or a million beings superior to man exist throughout space. One may, or a million may, so exist. They may take cognizance of man's actions. They may influence his destiny. I deny it not;

I affirm it not. This is no evasion of the argument. There may be inhabitants in the sun; one, or a million, or thousands of millions. I cannot say there are, nor can I assert that there are not. I know as little about the existence and nature of a God or Gods, as I do about the existence and nature of solar beings: and I trouble myself as little about the one as the other.

You say I *ought* to trouble myself. You say it is of vast importance for us to know. You say, if there be a God, we are accountable to him.

Here, then, we first join issue. Nothing upon earth, not my own existence, is more evident to me than this—that if there be an omnipotent God, it has not been his will that I should know any thing about him. How can I be sure of this? *Because I know nothing about him.* I have never sought to know him, you will urge? But I have. I have sought to know him anxiously, perseveringly. If he exist, he has concealed himself from me. I may be *uncertain* of his existence; I am *certain* that he has concealed it from me. I am certain—and if I could find a stronger word I would employ it—I am *certain* that *he did not intend me to know him.* You cannot deny this, except by asserting that this is a subject upon which we may not reason. Then why bid me approach it? 'Tis not of my seeking. Either we can reason of the intentions of a Deity, or we cannot. If we can, let us reason, and let us decide, as I have done. If we cannot, let us confess that to speak of Gods befits not men.

Suppose a God. Shall he be angry with me that I know him not? What a strange idea! He holds in his hands the power to reveal himself at any moment—the power to excite belief in my mind, in an instant, by his almighty volition: he holds the power, and exerts it not. And he shall punish me, *because* he exerts it not! I should consider myself a wretch unworthy to live, if, under similar circumstances, I acted thus toward the meanest reptile that crawls the earth. But we must not judge God, you say, by our human reason. Then, for consistency's sake, let us not talk about him.

But why should a God wish us to know him—to glorify him? I do not pretend to be less fond of praise than my neighbours; but I should be perfectly ashamed of my childishness, if I insisted upon the crawling caterpillar knowing me, or, supposing that I had created it, glorifying me.* If I wish to be known, or to be praised at all, it is by my equals only, not by worms of the dust. Man is less than a worm of the dust compared to (the usual conception of) a God.

But we shall be *accountable* to God! This is the strangest idea of all. If I had created you, Origen Bachelier; if I made you, bodily, mentally, morally, as you are; had given you the desires you possess; had placed you as you have been

* I would ask you to read, on this subject, an imaginary dialogue, originally given in No. 23 of vol. ii. of the Free Enquirer.

placed; had arranged every object and circumstance, even the most minute, that has ever presented itself before your senses, or influenced your actions, or acted upon your mind; had fixed the exact strength of temptation that has ever assailed you, and the exact degree of support which may have been afforded you to meet that temptation; if I had thus been your creator, your situator, your tempter, your supporter, who would be accountable—you to me, or I to you? If virtue within you was stronger than temptation, who had regulated its strength, you or I? If temptation was stronger than virtue, who made it so, you or I? If you were virtuous, should not I have caused your virtue? if vicious, should not I have caused your vice? Should not I, the potter—not you, the clay—be accountable (if accountability there must be) for both?

If God be man's creator, upholder, governor, there is not a thought of man's heart, not an impulse of his will—there is not a sensation he experiences, not an idea he forms, that is not God's—that does not come, directly, positively, from the Almighty. To say that all thoughts, impulses, sensations, ideas, come from one Being, and that the responsibility rests with another, is as reasonable in my eyes as it would be were I to hold this printed sheet accountable for the words I had stamped upon it. Had I not wished the words so printed, I should not so have printed them. Had a God not wished man so characterized and circumstanced, he would not have so organized or so placed him.

I ask you, then :

What are the proofs to man that a God or Gods—that a devil or devils—that angels—that spirits good or evil—in a word, that any beings of nature and attributes superior to man, exist?

If they do exist, why should we trouble ourselves about their existence? If they have the will that we should know them, have they not the power? and if both the will and the power, why do we not all know them? If they do *not* wish us to know them, why should we seek to do so?

The space allotted to me is exhausted; and I await your reply.

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

LETTER II.

New-York, February 5, 1831.

SIR,

I can conceive both of *sincere* sceptics and *insincere* ones—of those who doubt from want of conviction, and of those who,

rather than believe in future retribution, would forego, "riches, honour, a good name," or almost any thing else. Hence, I do not consider a man's scepticism a *certain* evidence of his sincerity.

It is difficult for me to conceive of a state of mind equilibrated, in relation to the question of the divine existence. There *is*, or there is *not*, a God. And it is not supposable that, in a case of this nature, there is equal reason for believing either the wrong or the right side. If there is a God, he did of course create the universe, and that too in an infinitely wise manner. If there is not a God, the universe must have been eternal, and void of plan. Now, to say that where there is a work of infinite wisdom, there is nothing therein manifest to show it to be such a work, more than to show it to be void of wisdom, appears to me unreasonable in the extreme, and *vice versa*. Yet it is virtually saying this, for a man to assert that he perceives no evidence to *affirm* or *deny* the existence of God. If he thinks upon the subject at all, he must in the nature of the case incline to the one side or the other. But if he thinks not upon it—if he banishes so important a subject from his mind, he acts very unreasonably.

It should be remembered, that the question now under discussion is, not whether we *know* there is a God, but whether, on the whole, there is reason to *believe* this. And suppose we *know nothing about it*, what has this to do with *belief*? We *know* nothing about Alexander the Great; still we *believe* something about him. For the very reason that we do not know a thing, we believe in relation to it; for, *were* we to know it, belief would be out of the question, inasmuch as knowledge excludes belief. It is a misuse of the term belief, to apply it in cases of knowledge. It is incorrect to say we believe what we know. For a man then to say, that he does not believe in a God because he does not know there is one, is a manifest absurdity.

That God has the *physical* power to do any thing to which physical power is applicable, I readily admit. But as the application of this power is made under the guidance of his infinite wisdom, I do not admit that he has the *moral* power to apply this physical power to its full extent in all cases. To illustrate. A good man has the physical power, that is the bodily strength, requisite to murder a numerous family of children. But he is morally unable to do it. The good principle within deters him from the exercise of his physical power in this manner. So of God. He has the physical power to do any physical deed, good or bad; but his wisdom and his goodness deter him from doing *wrong*. To say, then, without qualification, that God has the power to make us know him, is assuming the question, and talking at random. He has not the power (moral power I mean) to do this, unless his wisdom sees best. He would *not* be God, were he to act unwisely. If he has given us rational

evidence to *believe* in his existence, (which is the very point under discussion,) we are without excuse for disbelieving therein, and have no right to say that he did not *intend* we should thus believe. I believe there are evidences sufficient within the reach of every man, to convince him of the divine existence; and that if he is unconvinced thereof, it is either because he has not fully examined those evidences, or has not examined them with a becoming spirit. God, being good, has undoubtedly done all he could consistently do, to make his creatures acquainted with him—which without question is sufficient. Be it so, that a man is a sceptic; still, not knowing but there *may* be a God, he should say and *feel* thus: "O thou God of the universe, (if one there is,) do thou enlighten my mind, and lead me to necessary knowledge and belief." This prayer should be accompanied with a thorough examination of all the evidences to which he has access; the force of which evidences he should permit to take its legitimate effect on his mind, as that of other evidence does. At the same time, let him do in other respects what appears duty, and avoid doing what appears wrong, or even what appears questionable, yea, what may not appear so to him, but may be deemed wrong by others, (unless indeed it should appear duty to him to do it;) let him, I say, do all this, and I should myself be almost willing to be answerable for all the scepticism that would long continue in his mind. All this the sceptic can do; all this he ought to do. Yet how few, have we reason to believe, adopt this rational and proper course!

"But why," I am asked, "should God insist upon our knowing and glorifying him?" Because we *ought* so to do. He requires this, out of regard to right. A parent requires deference from a child, because that child should render such deference, and because it would be unseemly and rebellious for it not to do so. And inferiority on its own part, renders its debt so much the greater, and the parent's claim so much the stronger. How great then the obligation of man to render, and how strong the claim of the Creator to have him render, homage and adoration to himself!

That there is neither moral good nor evil in human actions, few, I believe, even of sceptics, are prepared to assert. That the man, who, to gratify revenge, assassinates another, is blameless, is a sentiment that outrages common sense, and that would, were it to be generally adopted, sunder the ties which hold together society, and cause man to fly for shelter from the face of his fellow, to the thick forest or the craggy cliff. If we are conscious of any thing whatever, it is of blame for certain actions. And if we are to blame, it follows of course, that neither nature nor God, nor any thing else, has *so* created, situated, circumstanced, and charactered us, as to render us *blameless* for those actions. And hence the argument against accountability to God, fails. To liken man, who has a will with regard to his actions, to a sheet of paper, which has none in relation to the

letters enstamped upon that, is evidently a very unsuitable comparison. Man acts, and acts according to his volition. The sheet of paper neither acts, nor has volition. And to represent God as governing voluntary agents, as men are, in the same manner as he governs inanimate matter, is equally incorrect.

In answer to the question, "What are the proofs of God's existence?" I reply: THE UNIVERSE—EVERY THING. There's not an insect, not a blade of grass, but displays omnipotence and omniscience; much more does the great WHOLE.

To the question, "Why should we trouble ourselves about the matter, even if God does exist?" I answer: Because it concerns us. If God is our maker, our ruler, our judge, common sense teaches us, that we ought to render him homage and obedience; in order to which, it is necessary to believe in his existence, and to know his will as relates to our duty.

I wish to know what to understand by the phrase, "being or *beings superior* to man." The question under discussion is, "Is there reason to believe in an *infinite God*?" not in *finite gods*. I intend, however, during this discussion, to treat on the *unity* of God.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

TO ORIGEN BACHELER.

LETTER II.

February 12, 1831.

An insincere man is not one who *believes* this way or that way, but one who *professes* what he does not believe. What motive a man can have to forego "riches, honour, a good name," in order to profess unpopular doubts, *which he does not entertain*, is a mystery to me.

Let us take up one question at a time; and the most important first. The questions of accountability, free-will, and so on, will follow by and by.

I freely admit to you that we cannot *know* that there is a God; and thus, in one sense, all men and women are atheists, or rather sceptics. But have we something less than a knowledge of him? Can we reasonably *believe*, though we cannot *know*, his existence? That is the plain question. Proceed we to test it.

"What are the proofs of a creating God's existence?" "The universe—every thing."

The universe is a proof to us of its *own* existence, for our senses perceive it: but why a proof of any thing more?

"I see a chair," you say. "The chair is proof of more than

its own existence: it is proof of the existence of a chair-maker. So is the universe of a universe-maker." This is the sum and substance of the argument of Paley and all natural theologians. Let us examine it.

A chair proves to us a chair-maker. Why? *Only* because we have seen or known, or can every day see or know, that men make chairs. We have never seen—we cannot see, Gods make universes. We cannot—you yourself admit it—know that they make them. We can trace back chairs to their origin, and find that origin a chair-maker. Could we trace back a universe to its origin, and find that origin a God, the cases would be parallel; and we should believe in a God as we do in a chair-maker. It is not the *existence* of a chair, that proves its maker, but the ascertained fact that men do make chairs. *Without that ascertained fact*, the chair would prove, like the universe, only its own existence.

If chairs dropped on the earth from the clouds, there might be some analogy between chairs and universes; but then chairs would no longer be proofs of chair-makers.

"But if chairs are made,"* you argue, "why not a universe?" It is for you to say, why; not for me to say, why not. I cannot disprove to you that creatures walk about in the sun with their heads under their arms.

But you think it likely, because the cases are analogous. I cannot see the analogy. To make a chair, is to shape and fashion certain materials after a certain form: to create a universe is to give existence to non-existent matter. What analogy is there here? Because a man can and does *put together certain materials* to form a chair, is that the shadow of a proof, that a God, can and does *give existence to certain particles* to form a universe?

Some things are artificial; that is, made by man: some are natural; that is, not made by man. Well. This is a simple fact. We have ascertained the origin† of the former; we have not ascertained the origin of the latter:

"but human pride
Is skilful to invent most serious names,
To hide its ignorance."

* It is a pity that men are not careful to use all words in a definite sense. If they were, we should never hear the same term applied to the fitting together of divers pieces of wood, &c., to form a chair, and the calling into existence of innumerable atoms, to constitute a universe; we should never think of using the same sound for two so totally dissimilar ideas; we should not say, to *make* a chair and to *make* a world; meaning, in the one case, a mere SELECTION and MODIFICATION, and, in the other, an actual CREATION. And then we should not be betrayed, as we now are, by the mere sound of a word, into imagining analogy where none exists. The utterly illogical argument implied in the question: "If chairs are *made*, why not universes?" owes its birth to a mere verbal accident.

† That is, in the popular sense of the term. In strictness, man, the creature of a day, can trace nothing, in the eternal succession of causes and consequents, to its *origin*.

We are not satisfied to confess, that some things we can trace to their origin and some we cannot. We think to mend the matter by supplying a last link whenever we cannot discover one, and by calling that last link God. We forget, that the link is *supplied* only. We forget, that to call whatever we can call by no other name, God, and that to make this name God, the cause of every thing for which we can find no other cause, is only to invest our ignorance with a title, and then to imagine we have transformed it into knowledge.

In truth and strictness, when we say "God made that," we only mean "Man did not make it." The assertion is in reality a negative one, expressive of our ignorance. But our vanity does not like the form; so we make it positive, and imagine it expressive of our knowledge.

"But in the universe there is order, there is harmony, there is regular succession, there is happiness." Well! then the universe, or rather parts of it, are orderly, harmonious, regular, beautiful, and happy. "But order, harmony, beautiful succession, happiness, must have a maker." Why? because chairs have a maker!

When you say "chairs *must* have a maker," you refer to certain phenomena (cutting down a tree, sawing, planing, and so forth, all performed by man) which always do precede the formation of a chair. *Had you no knowledge of these phenomena*—had you never seen, or otherwise satisfactorily ascertained, that, before a chair was made, a tree must be felled, and wood must be sawed and planed and shaped and fitted—you could not rationally make the assertion, that a chair must have a maker; and, *except with direct reference to these ascertained phenomena*, your assertion is without meaning: for that assertion means—nay, *can* mean—nothing else except that *there always is* (and therefore *must be*, for uniform repetition is all the idea we have of necessity)—that *there is always cutting and sawing and planing and so on, before a chair is made*. But when you say that the universe, with its order, its beauty, its harmony, *must* have a maker, you have no phenomena to refer to. If there be phenomena that *always* do precede (or in other words *must* precede) creation, *for you* at least they do not exist; that is, you can take no cognizance of them. The necessity, therefore, of which you speak, is PURELY VERBAL: for it has no ascertained uniform repetition (like the process of chair-making) to which to refer, and therefore refers to nothing.†

In a chair we may speak of *design*, because we can take cognizance of, and refer to, a chair-maker and his intentions; *and in this sense only has design any meaning*. In the universe

* The familiar expression, "God knows," not inaptly illustrates this observation.

† This argument would apply even if there *were* analogy between making chairs and universes, which, I have already shown, there is not.

we may speak of order, beauty, and harmony, with reference to our own human feelings and perceptions; but of *design*, we cannot rationally speak: for to speak of it presupposes a knowledge of, and a reference to, the existence and intentions of a Creator, and is thus an assumption of the very point in question. We must prove a *designer*, before design can have any thing to which to refer; or, in other words, before it can have any meaning whatever.*

A natural chair might be formed of the projecting roots of a tree. We cannot speak of design here; because there is no chair-maker nor chair-maker's intentions to which to refer; yet it may be as beautiful and convenient a chair as any other.

The Highlander who found a watch, is said to have imagined it an animal. When it stopped, in consequence of not being wound up, "Poor thing," he said, "it died the same night I got it." He *might* have guessed that it was a work of art, and had a maker; but if he had, it would have been merely because he had seen a somewhat similar specimen of human handicraft; the steelwork on his dirk for instance.

But again. If harmony, if beauty, if intelligence, if happiness, indicate design, and necessitate the existence of a designer, *in the case of the universe*, they do so much more *in the case of a universe-maker*. The world may be orderly, beautiful, intelligent, and happy: its Creator, if he exist, is much more so. If the chair-maker's mind indicate design far more distinctly than the chair, then surely the universe-maker's mind must indicate design far more distinctly than the universe. If man be a masterpiece, God is the masterpiece of masterpieces: and if in the one case intelligence and admirable harmony point to a maker, much more so in the other. If it be a marvel that a man exist without a Creator, it is the marvel of marvels that a God should!

The difficulty, therefore, is increased, not diminished, by tracing the chain a link further back; and we are admonished that we are involved in a discussion to which human reason is unequal and human language impertinent.

I have spoken to one point only in your letter, to avoid confusion. When you reply the rest shall follow in order.

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

P.S. The phrase "being or beings superior to man" is, I think, plain enough. The broad question, as I understand it, regards all superhuman agency.

* See, in further elucidation of this line of argument, A. B. Johnson's admirable work on the "Philosophy of Human Knowledge," pp. 133-4, &c. The work was published some years since by Carvills, New-York.

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

LETTER III.

New-York, February 9, 1831.

SIR,

An insincere sceptic is one who, unwilling to believe divine truth, sets his wits to work to disprove it; and though the evidence in its favour may be clear, yet he closes his eyes against it, and, it may be, comes at length to waver and doubt in reality.

I do not ask that it be admitted to me, that we cannot *know* there is a God. I have made no such statement. I now say, we *can* know this; some *do* know it. And, "If *any* man will do his will *he* shall know." However, I do not admit, that it constitutes a man a sceptic or an atheist in any sense, *not* to know there is a God. The question, however, now under discussion, is, not whether we *know* there is one, but whether there is reason to *believe* this.

"Why is the universe a proof to us of any thing more than its own existence?" For the same reason that a work of art, is a proof of an artisan; which proof exists, not in the circumstance that we have seen similar things made, but in the *manifestation* of a *plan* in the *thing itself*, showing it to be the production of a *mind*. Had the Scottish Highlander opened the watch that he found, and seen that the inside was composed of silver and gold and steel, who will for a moment believe that he would have considered it an animal?

It is by the *manifestation* of mind, that we know even man to be possessed of one. We know not whether a stranger is an idiot or a man of reason, till his words or actions manifest the same. But *mere* words and actions do not manifest *intelligence*. Words may be nonsense; actions may be void of purpose. It is therefore the *kind* of words and actions by which we determine with regard to mind. If a man manufacture a chair, for example, the article which he manufactures being for a *purpose*, shows him to be possessed of intelligence and design. The mind itself, therefore, is *within* its possessor, and invisible; but the *proof* of it to others is in his works. It is in works, then, that we are to look for *evidences* of mind; and *those* works are evidences thereof which manifest *an object*: a watch, for instance to *keep time*; a chair to *serve as a seat*, &c., &c. Now, if works of this description, that is, *works of purpose*, are not infallible evidences of mind, we cannot *prove* that even man has one, or that there is any such faculty in existence. But if such works are infallible evidences, then we have countless evidences of the existence of mind manifested in the universe. The eye is to see; the ear, to

hear; the soil, to produce food; the sun, to warm and enlighten, &c., &c. Nor is it reasonable to say, that these are merely effects without design. The infant, for example, comes into the world prepared *beforehand* with organs of sensation *exactly adapted* to the state of things into which at birth it enters;—which organs could only have had relation to futurity at the time of their being prepared, inasmuch as there was no chance for their exercise before its birth. Its eyes are adapted to the light, its ears to sound, its lungs to the air, its palate to taste, its nose to smell, its whole self to every thing about it. Now what can be more incredible, than that all this *pre-adaptation*, this curious and appropriate *preparation* in *so many respects*, should merely *happen* so to occur, without an intelligent cause—without a designer? Again. Behold the different parts of unintelligent nature combining to produce beneficial effects. The earth receives and nourishes seed in her bosom, the sun imparts thereto its genial heat, the clouds their copious showers, and, by these united operations, a crop is produced to sustain man and beast. And yet is there no design, no mind, concerned in all these movements?

“If weak thy faith, why choose the harder side?”

Most assuredly, it requires infinitely greater credulity to believe that no mind is concerned in the regulation of the universe, than to believe the Bible or even the Koran!

But we are told, that 'tis the *nature* of things to operate as they do. As well might it be said, that it is the nature of *machinery* to operate as *that* does. But is it a sufficient solution of the *cause* of the operations of machinery, to say this much respecting it, and there leave it? To say that it is the nature of a factory to make cloth, would be a singular way indeed of accounting for its operations; but no more so than to say, that it is the nature of the factory of the universe, equally unintelligent, to produce food, &c. It is demonstrable by the operations of nature, all tending to purposes, that intelligence exists somewhere:—as much so as in the case of a factory. It is equally demonstrable, that it does not exist in nature itself, any more than in a factory, inasmuch as intelligence does not exist in mere matter. Whence it follows unavoidably, that there must be a God.

To me, sir, 'tis strange logic, to be told, that a chair proves a chair-maker only because we know that he made it. I should suppose that, in such a case, the chair-maker would prove the chair, not the chair the chair-maker. To say that one thing proves another, because we know that other, does far transcend my utmost comprehension.

“Could we trace back the universe to its origin, and *know* that origin to be God,” we should cease to *believe* in relation to the subject: for knowledge excludes belief. Hence, those who believe nothing but what they know believe nothing at all.

It is for a sceptic to give a reason for his scepticism. If he sees no evidence of a God ; if he does not absolutely *admit* his existence ; it devolves on him to dispose of the difficulties consequent on his *non-belief*. He should know, that he has something more to do than to stand and doubt. If he will have his doubts, let him take their consequences, let him reconcile intelligent effects with unintelligent causes, whether he can decide the case of the headless inhabitants of the sun or not ; for these two cases are by no means parallel.

With regard to the analogy between the making of a chair and a universe, although there is none so far as relates to the *creation* of the particles of matter which compose that universe, yet there is the most perfect, between the *arranging* of those particles *for purposes*, and the arranging of the various parts of a chair for its purposes.

To investigate the causes of things, is reasonable and useful. It is the method by which the human mind advances in improvement and knowledge. It is by *reasoning* that we arrive at *conclusions*. To talk of the "eternal succession of causes and consequents," is jargon and absurdity. Man can trace an *artificial* work to its origin, notwithstanding his being the creature of a day : why not then trace thus a natural work ? But it is not *tracing* a thing to its origin, to see that thing *originated*. He has but a poor claim to the name of a *free inquirer*, who confines himself to matters of *knowledge*. We do not *inquire* concerning what we *know*. Hence, if we are not to reason and inquire concerning things unknown, we must cease to reason and inquire at all. We reason *from* things which we *do* know, to things which we *do not* know. When we *know* both cause and effect, no room is left for *inquiry* on the subject. To look on things around us, and merely to say that they are as they are, is any thing rather than investigation, and reasoning, and inquiry. Suppose Newton on beholding the heavens had exclaimed, "Well, 'tis a simple fact that there are stars," and then had stopped at that ; where would have been his present system of astronomy ? Suppose Columbus had said, "That there is one continent I *know*, but I *know nothing* about any other ; therefore, I will *reason nothing* about one ;" what, in such a case, would have become of his discovery ?

When I say that God made this, that, and the other, I mean more than that man did *not* make them : I mean that God *did* make them—and that he did make whatever in nature has a beginning, is as evident, as that a thing cannot make itself—as evident, as that nothing cannot make something. And here I would ask, what in the universe has not a beginning ? Has not every man, every beast, every bird, every insect, every fish, every tree, every shrub, every plant, and, in fine, every thing whatever that contains either animal or vegetable life ? All these things, then, must necessarily have a maker ; they cannot *come into* existence without one. And as they do, in their con-

tion and adaptation, exhibit the impress of intelligence, they show their maker to be possessed of intelligence, and therefore prove a God.

But, says the sceptic, what evidence is there that the universe, that matter itself, had a beginning? I reply: The *mode in which it exists*. There is the impress of mind on *all* matter—on the universe *as a whole*. Now, as mere matter is void of mind, it cannot of itself exhibit marks of mind; hence, as the marks which it does exhibit must have been derived, it is of course not eternal. The existence of matter, then, in a state of order, proves it not to have been eternal. The appearances of the earth likewise show the same thing; so does the present state of improvement in society; so does the present number of its inhabitants; so does all history; so does every thing that relates to the subject.

In saying that a chair must have a maker, I refer to nothing but the self-evident fact, that unintelligent matter cannot exist in a state of order, and with a clear reference to purpose, without being *made* so to exist *by* an intelligent maker. If matter had power and intelligence to adapt *itself* to purposes, the case would be different. But this we know it has not. And were chairs actually to "drop from the clouds," I should even then suppose they had a maker, though not a human one. Yea, were "a chair to be formed of the roots of a tree," in that event should I suppose the same. I deny, however, that a *natural* chair can be formed thus. It would be *supernatural*, were any such thing to be thus produced. I speak of a real chair, properly so called, with its mortises and its tenons adapted to one another, its wedges and nails to hold it together, &c., &c., for a bunch of roots, grow as they might, would not be a chair, in the proper sense of the term.

To say that we cannot rationally *conclude* that the universe has a maker, because we do not *know* that it has, is, as I have already shown, to put an end to all reasoning. When we see a man make a chair, we *know* he makes it; we have no *supposition*, no belief, on the subject. But when we see an Egyptian mummy, we *believe* that had an *embalmer*, not however because we have *seen* embalmers embalm mummies, (for this we have not seen,) but the mummy itself exhibits evidences of having been embalmed, *to be preserved*. Still, the "phenomenon" of embalming does no more exist for our cognizance, than does the "phenomenon" of creating the universe.

To make a designer the proof of design, is making a cause the proof of an effect, and reasoning backwards; and that too on assumed premises. How can we know a designer? By looking into his cranium, and seeing his thoughts? O no! Well, how then? Why, by observing his outward manifestations of mind. But what can be considered as such manifestations? Such as have appearances of purpose; which is all the proof we have of design or designer in any case, and which is as clear

in natural as in artificial things. To require us, then, to know a designer, in order to the proving of a design, is to require us first to know a matter which is to *be proved*, that we may thereby prove the evidences by which we are to prove itself!

The argument, that if order, &c., indicate design and a designer in the case of the universe, they indicate the same in the case of its maker, goes to destroy all distinction between a designer and his work. It is to confound mind and matter. It is to make one thing another; to make a *designer* a *design*; to make absurdities, contradictions, nonsense. What are we to understand by God's being the masterpiece of masterpieces, and by that harmony, &c., indicated by his mind? Mind is not an indication. It is invisible. God's mind does not indicate harmony, but harmony (the harmony of the universe) indicates his mind. There is nothing in the nature of mind to show it to be an effect; and were it not that we know that man has a beginning, we could not prove *his* mind to be an effect.

Inasmuch as that things do exist, something must necessarily have been eternal; for, had there ever been a time when there was nothing, there would never have any thing come into existence, inasmuch as something cannot be produced by nothing. On any system, therefore, *something* must have been eternal. Now, as the universe did not come by generation, it must have come by creation, or have been eternal. Unaccountable then as it is, either the universe or a creator is self-existent and eternal. This is demonstration, and furnishes something on which the mind can fasten. Now, to say the least, there is no greater difficulty in admitting the eternity of a God, than that of a universe. Nor does any difficulty in the case, be it what it may, disprove the fact, that something did eternally exist. It stands in all the strength of demonstration, of certainty. The only question therefore is, Is the universe eternal, or is there an eternal and intelligent being? And now I seriously ask, Which conclusion is the more reasonable:—that an unintelligent universe should have eternally existed in an intelligent manner, or that there is an intelligent power which brought it into an orderly existence, and so continues it? In other words, Is there an intelligent cause for the universe and its operations, or is there no intelligence—no cause? Or, in other words still, Is there, or is there not an infinite God?

ORIGEN BACHELIER

TO ORIGEN BACHELER.

LETTER III.

February 26, 1831.

The Genevese *Bonnet*, who is good Christian authority, admits: "It is easy and agreeable to trust and believe; to doubt requires an unpleasant effort." Every sceptic who has once been a believer knows this. From the time our infant ears first drink in the nurse's ghost-story, or listen to Defoe's immortal fable, we *wish* to believe, and *do* believe, without the trouble of suspicion, or the anxieties of suspense and examination. Youth learns to doubt and mistrust slowly and painfully, after many a bitter lesson in the school of experience.

And of all doubts, to doubt our own knowledge is the last and hardest lesson we learn. No one, believe me, ever "sets his wits to work" to prove how little he knows, or "closes his eyes" against the evidence of his own ingenuity. There are a thousand reasons why a man should pretend to superhuman knowledge—nay, why he should set his wits to work, to prove that he has gained the victory over fate and space, and penetrated the mysteries not only of the earth beneath, but of the heavens above; until at last, pretence becomes reality, and ingenious imagination turns to honest belief. There is not one reason, why a man should pretend to that most unfashionable of heresies, spiritual shortsightedness.

A Socrates—who, brought before the Five Hundred and impeached of atheism, "confessed that while others boasted they were acquainted with every thing, he himself knew nothing"—a Socrates is of all human beings the most scarce. A thousand children are found who never doubt that they explain why an apple falls to the ground, when they say, "*Because it has nothing to support it;*" but only one Newton, to pause and reflect, whether that be answer sufficient.

If I seem unnecessarily to urge these considerations, it is because I know that a belief in *wilful* scepticism is common and fashionable; because I bear in mind, that it lighted the fires of Smithfield and the *Auto-da-Fes* of Spain; and because I wish you to believe (what is most religiously true) that my spiritual modesty is any thing but affectation.

I have as much curiosity as my neighbours, and as much desire to gratify it; and when I was but six years old, I remember teasing my father to tell me whether God made the trees grow, by getting under their roots and pushing them up. In latter years I have sat down, often and often, to gaze on the sun, on the stars, on the fair earth or the majestic sea, and then to ask myself if I could not penetrate the mystery of this glorious creation. I have questioned my reason, again and again, if these outward and visible signs were not evidence of

an inward, invisible Spirit. If that Spirit exist, he is my witness how reluctantly I came to Socrates' conclusion, "that I knew nothing."*

Man contrives, designs, purposes, adapts certain means to ends. We see he does. We feel he does. We do not indeed "look into his cranium," but we can see him design and contrive without the trepanner's assistance. *Could we not see men design and contrive, or could we not know from our own experience that man does design and contrive, design or contrivance would never prove to us human agency.* Design proves to us man's agency, *only* because we have seen or known all this. Design proves to us man's agency *only* IN AS FAR AS we see or know it. We know very well (that is, we have rational grounds for belief) that man not only makes chairs, but embalms mummies. *Therefore*—and, I repeat it, *therefore* ALONE—is an embalmed mummy an evidence to us of human agency. There is a fitness analogous to what men call design in the lenses and all the nice telescopic machinery of the eye; yet this fitness never leads us to believe that men make eyes. Why? Because we never saw or knew a man make an eye; and have no rational grounds for belief that a man ever made one. It is not fitness or apparent design, then, *independent of our observation of the designer*, that proves human agency.

You may call it absurd, if you please, but it is not the less true, that we can only trace the connection from design up to a human designer, *because we have previously traced the connection from a human designer down to a design.* Where the connection cannot be traced the one way, neither can it be the other. In the case of the eye, for instance, we cannot trace man's agency in what we are pleased to call its arrangements and contrivances; and *consequently* its apparent design is not evidence to us of human agency.

But now presents itself the question: There is that in the universe and all about us, that, in a measure, *resembles* human design, yet proceeds (as we know by experience) from no human designer. To look no further than our own bodies, there is that most perfect of optical instruments, the eye; there is that most ingenious of bellowses, the thorax; there is that most unwearied of fountain-pumps, the heart; there are those most beautiful of distributing-pipes, the veins; there is that best of mechanism, the mechanism of the smooth-working joints, of the contractile muscles, of the connecting tendons, of the nicely-hinged vertebræ. There is—but it needs not further to enumerate. Within us, around us, on every side of us, there

* Do me the justice to believe, that when I use the word *know*, it is not in any quibbling, metaphysical sense. When I say "I know nothing of it," I mean plainly and simply, *that I see no rational ground for assertive belief on the subject.*

You have asserted, but certainly not explained to us, that some men *know* (in your own strictest sense of the term) that there is a God.

is that which, in some respects, *resembles* the design of man, (only that it is far more perfect) yet is *not* man's design. Is this truly design? If so, whence or whose is it? Who is the workman here? who the optician? who the bellows-maker? who set up the fountain, and laid the distributing-pipes, and arranged the whole magnificent mechanism? Since the effects are similar, is it not *likely* (at least) that the causes are similar also? If we *know* that there is a being—a man—from whose weak mind proceed small and imperfect contrivances; is there not analogy in favour of the belief, that there is another being—a *great* man—a God—from whose strong mind proceed great and very perfect contrivances?—

—CAN we decide? CAN we stretch analogy so far? Or if we imagine this *likelihood*—for it *can*, in the very nature of things be nothing more—are we the wiser for imagining it? Or can we ever be sure—or have we rational grounds for any thing like satisfactory belief,—that some *great man* (or more than one, perhaps) exists somewhere, and is the contriver of whatever mortal man does not contrive? But suppose this analogical argument, which unhesitatingly (not to say *presumptuously*) stretches comparison from earth to heaven, and, after one short moment's inspection of one poor speck of the universe—(for what is our life but a moment, and our earth but a speck?)—decides from the capabilities of man, on the attributes of God,—suppose this hazarded argument conclusive: grant, for a moment, that we could fully, satisfactorily convince ourselves of the existence of a great architectural spirit, the creator of this wondrous edifice; still, if he does—or *it does*—for we are even without the possibility of clothing our ideas in words—if he or it—if one or a thousand Gods (the contrivers of what men call natural design, just as man is the contriver of artificial design) do truly exist, how can we take cognizance of him or them, speak of them, think of them, or even *imagine* his or their doings? A man makes a door-hinge; our human minds can conceive that. We trace it from the hardware store-room to the anvil; thence to the smelting furnace, and thence again to the iron-mine: and we distinguish and comprehend the agency of man in each modifying process, from the first digging of the rough ore to the last polish of the finished article. Shall a God form and fashion the far more ingenious hinge of the knee? CAN we conceive of this? We trace the knee-hinge from the adult to the child, from the child to the infant, from the infant to the fœtus, from the fœtus—whither? *Perhaps* to the ovarium; *perhaps* to the spermatic fluid. But these *perhapses* are idle; and even if they were not, we have gotten but one more link of the endless chain. We are lost, bewildered. Are we the better, are we the more enlightened, do we see the mystery the clearer, for saying to ourselves that God placed the nucleus of a knee-joint in the sperm or in the ovarium—that he nourished it in the fœtus, developed it in the

infant, strengthened it in the child, hardened and fortified it in the adult? Have we *explained* any thing? Have we succeeded, except in cloaking our ignorance? Have we done more than to employ words for which there are no prototypes on earth, nor within the cognizance of human perception? Can we have an idea of a being, or a spirit, or a power, or an essence, or any other immaterial conception, *following this mechanical contrivance through all its wonderful stages, so as to merit the title of its maker—its contriver?* And if we have none, what avails it that we utter THE WORDS? If we cannot conceive such mechanism without a mechanic, *can we conceive the mechanic?* I cannot. I shrink even from the attempt to embody the conception. I feel, that thus to task my mind is to require of it an impossibility.

When I say to myself, "God MADE the knee-hinge," and endeavour to understand by it *something more* (as you say you do) *than that man did not make it*, I feel and know that I am employing language which, for me, has no significance,—which typifies to me no thing, no reality; which, in fact, is not language, but only SOUND. The sound *man* has a prototype, namely, a material form of flesh and blood, visible to the sight, sensible to the touch, a thing not with a name only, but a local habitation. But God,—have I—can I, or any human creature, have even the faintest outshading of an idea how he or it or they exist?—whether in a body or out of a body—whether filling a part of space or the whole—whether a unity or a plurality—whether as the great universe itself, or something distinct from it—if distinct, how pervading it—if pervading, how a separate existence—if not separate, how to be distinguished, even in imagination, from nature? I have asked myself a thousand times—(and answered the question with the modest "no" of Socrates)—whether I have the remotest conception of a great something, which thinks without any organs of thought, which feels without any organs of feeling, which moves without limbs, acts without momentum, exists without dimensions; which is invisible, impalpable, inaudible, imperceptible, immaterial;—in a word, which has not one of the attributes, conditions, qualities, modifications, or phases, which constitute what men call an *entity*, an *existence*; and by which alone the human mind can fasten upon the idea of a reality. I ask myself whether *man* would be for me any thing but three meaningless letters, if he had no body, no shape, no colour, no voice, no motion. I ask myself, if such a thing is not (to finite human reason) a mere bundle of negatives, with nothing but the single, (and for me) idle word—IT IS—to counterbalance them all.

Experience, analogy, language, conception—every thing that informs or guides or enlightens us in human affairs or human discussions, deserts us here! Why should we madly persist to wander forth into tractless, endless darkness?

In all this, let me beg you to remark, I differ from you in

asserting less, not in denying more. My crime, if crime it must be, is of diffidence, not of presumption. If I refuse to venture into darkness without a guide—into unknown regions without an interpreter, it is because I feel the necessity, to a human being, of both. I know the earth to be but an atom in the universe, and myself but an atom on the earth. I live fifty, perhaps a hundred years; and I know that I can see but one link—what say I?—but *one small speck of one link!*—of the mighty chain of causes and effects, that stretches back into the beginningless past, and forward into the endless future

And I am called upon to talk of infinite space, and to decide regarding a being that inhabits it and arranges its order and administers its laws!—I can imagine one solid globe so large that its circumference shall extend a million times beyond the resting place of the farthest star; I can think of that globe as but an impalpable grain of dust upon another globe, that is to the first what the earth is to the microscopic speck that is visible only in the sunbeams; and I can say to myself that even *that* globe were a mere atom, a nothing, in the universe. But have I yet done more than to expose the weak finity, the poor inadequacy, of human conceptions?

Or am I called upon to think of eternity, and of the power that fills it?—I have been told that light travels at the rate of a million of miles in five seconds; and I can imagine a star so far removed from our earth, that light, after it had so travelled during a million of centuries, should have traversed but, as it were, a hair's breadth of the distance. I can suppose a circle drawn at that star's inconceivable distance around the earth, and a globe of sand of such stupendous dimensions, that its circumference should fill up that mighty circle. I can imagine each grain of that sand a million times less than the smallest animalcule that microscope ever made visible. I can imagine one of these imperceptible grains detached from that globe at the expiration of each million of centuries, until the whole immeasurable mass should be thus dissolved, grain by grain. I can *speak* of the period that should elapse before that globe were thus dissolved. Nay I can say more. I can speak of a globe thus formed; and thus lessening, until, grain by grain, it disappear, then replaced by another of equal dimensions, in like manner to lessen and at last to pass away; and another, and another, and another, until hundreds should be added to hundreds, and thousands to thousands, and millions to millions, in the stupendous succession. And when I take the sum of these periods I can ask myself if I have obtained a tenth, a thousandth, a millionth part of ETERNITY, and I can answer, "*No, not the smallest conceivable fraction!*"

—But is not this only a mockery of language and of human reason? Is it not like seeking to measure the winds with a rod, or striving to take the cubical dimensions of chaos?—

For myself except when forced upon these subjects, I never think of them. I use language where I can find prototypes; and when I approach the north pole of Mystery, where the needle of reason veers all round the compass and no longer points to any thing, I put about the helm of my thoughts, and steer back again into the temperate regions of Reality.

If I dream of a pervading spirit of order and beauty, filling infinite space and existing throughout eternity—if I embody the power or powers of nature, and call up an image of that which

Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glow in the stars, and blossoms in the trees,
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent—

If I please myself in conjuring forth from the glowing regions of fancy such an image as this—it is as I would dream of any other poetical personification—of the Spirit of the Winds, or the Genius of the Deep—of virtue as some fair ethereal being, or of vice as a form of fury and of darkness. I never introduce these poetical imaginations into grave discussions; not because I can assert that such conceptions are *false*, but only that (for man) they are *idle*.

In taking this stand, I repeat it, it is not for me to *explain* the system of the universe, or the creation of things, or the origin of man, or the eternity or non-eternity of the universe, or any other of the arcana of nature. I tell you plainly, I pretend not to explain them. If you do, I shall be glad to hear your explanation. It is for me to stand and doubt, where I cannot unriddle. If you can do more, you are wiser than I; and, in that case, the task of unriddling is yours. If you can tell me whether man eternally existed on the earth or not—whether all sprung from one pair or from a thousand—whether there was nothing but God in the universe ten thousand years ago—whether there are generations of Gods, or of worlds, as well as generations of animals and men, or even whether the earth itself be not some huge animal—whether the earth's creator may not be a great effect as well as a great cause;*—nay—for if we enter the region of imagination at all, we may be as excursive as we please—whether a God might not be sup-

* Your assertion to the contrary notwithstanding, I cannot perceive the shadow of a reason why, if we are dissatisfied to conceive a universe without a maker, we should be satisfied to conceive a God without one. All causes of which we know any thing, are effects with reference to some still preceding and producing cause. The mind of man is no exception to the rule; and if there be (as the tendency of your argument goes to establish, analogy between things human and divine, why an exception in the case of the mind of God? Your argument makes man, who is himself a designer, also a design. Where, then, (on your own premises) is the "absurdity, contradiction, nonsense," of following up the idea, and supposing a greater designer than man, himself, in turn, a design? and so on, ad infinitum!

posed to create a universe, to establish its natural laws, to leave it to itself, and then, (if to an immaterial essence a term so merely human may be applied) *to die!*—in a word, if you can determine all the probabilities and possibilities in the range of unearthly imagination—ay! or even, satisfactorily to yourself, *guess* the solution of the great riddle—you are constituted differently from me.

With eyes and a telescope, like Newton, I am willing to study astronomy, and reason of the celestial motions. With ships at my command, and an unexplored hemisphere before me, I might have argued like Columbus. But when I have neither spiritual eyes to see, nor telescope to enlarge, nor spiritual ships to carry me whither I may solve my doubts and substantiate my theories, I rest satisfied without any unearthly conception or spiritual hypothesis.

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

LETTER IV.

New-York, March 5, 1831.

SIR,

Let theorists say what they may, still, experience shows that it is disagreeable to believe *some* things; and among these things, it is disagreeable to *some* men to believe in future retribution:—so much so, that they *do* set their wits to work to disprove it, as some of them afterwards acknowledge. And the reason why this doctrine is to them so disagreeable, is, that they are conscious it will fare ill with themselves, in case it is true. This, sir, is, in my opinion, the true source of *almost all* the scepticism in existence. I say, *almost all*; for I believe there are *some* cases of exception.

The introduction of Socrates on the part of a sceptic, is most infelicitous. It was the very diffidence of that philosopher in his own knowledge that induced him to admit a God. *He* did not presume to prescribe rules for the regulation of the universe, and then, because he found that universe differently regulated, to deny that it had a regulator. Not he. Conscious of his own limited wisdom, he did as every other *genuine* philosopher does; he supposed that what appeared to him disorder, seemed thus in consequence of his limited views, and that this was therefore reason for supposing it to be so in reality. "What I understand," said this great philosopher, "I admire, and am fully convinced to be every way worthy of its author; and therefor

I conclude what I understand not to be equally excellent, and that it would appear so, if I understood all its concerns." This is sound reasoning; and well would it be, if those who talk so much of Socrates, were to act as rationally in this respect as did he himself.

I have not asserted that *some men can* know there is a God; but, that *some men do*, and that *any man can*, know this. And as to *explaining* the nature of this knowledge to those ignorant of it, one might as well undertake to explain the appearance of colours to the blind. It is a matter of experience. But as to the *way* by which this knowledge is *obtained*, I would say in the language of scripture, "Seek, and ye shall find:"—"Do his will, and thou shalt know."

On the subject of design I would remark, that this is merely an act of the mind, devising the accomplishment of an object. As then it is an act of the mind, it is invisible. It is therefore incorrect to say, that we can *see* men design. We can only see them *execute* their designs. Hence, the only *evidence* of another's design which any individual has, consists in the outward and visible manifestation thereof. But mere words and actions are not such manifestations: for both *may* be, and sometimes *are*, unconscious and involuntary, as in the case of *absent-mindedness*; or they may be void of *purpose*, as in the case of *idiocy*. Those words and actions only are evidences of design which manifest a purpose. A watch, for instance is *to keep time*; embalming is *for the preservation of the embalmed*. But *such* manifestations, that is, manifestations where purpose is apparent, *are* proofs of design, or else we have no proofs that even man has any. And they are *infallible* proofs, or none at all. Nor does the seeing of a man *perform* a work prove a design, but, as has been heretofore shown, the work itself is the proof. If it is a work in which purpose is apparent, then it proves a design; otherwise, not. Hence, whether we see a work performed or not, it is of no consequence, as far as relates to its being a proof of design. Nor would the mere seeing of the thing made, render it more so. Were we to see a man engaged in prizing a stone from the earth, this would be no evidence to us of his design in so doing. What use he intends to make of it, we do not perceive. But when he lays that stone, it may be, in a wall or a building, its *connection* with that wall or building shows us his design. 'Tis true, that, were we not to see the man do it, we should not know it to be the work of that particular individual, and it would therefore be no evidence to us of design in *him*. Still, it would be evidence of *design itself*, and consequently of design in some one. Hence, though we have never seen *any* agency, either human or divine, in the embalming of mummies, "we have rational grounds for belief," that agency has been concerned therein. But why? Not because we have "*seen*" agency thus "*FAR*;" not "*because we have previous*" traced the connection from the designer down to the des-

but because it exhibits evidence of purpose, and for this solely.

But the marks by which we distinguish human agency divine, is another consideration. The mere evidence of is not proof of *human* agency. There is as much apparent purpose in the universe, as in the works of man. Certain eye is as evidently for the purpose of seeing with, and for that of hearing with, as are spectacles and ear-trumpets the enabling of the dim-eyed and the deaf to see and hear the sun is as evidently for the purpose of giving light as candle. Design, therefore, is as clear in the works of as in those of art. How, then, can we distinguish artificial natural things? By the difference in their physical appearance. True, "the lenses, and all the nice telescopic machinery eye," do not prove that man made that; nay, they disappear. And wherefore? Not "because we never saw or knew make an eye," (for we never saw or knew a man embalm a mummy) but merely because it is a work superior to man therefore proves a superior workman.

There were several sentences in my opponent's last which it may be as well to place alongside of one another, purpose of prominently exhibiting their incongruities. I ample:

"Design proves to us man's agency *only* IN AS FAR as we see or know it."

"We know very well is, we have rational grounds for *belief*, that man embalm mummies. Therefore an embalmed mummy evidence to us of human agency

"That which men call design in the lenses, and all the nice telescopic machinery of the eye never leads us to believe that men make eyes. Why? Because we never saw or knew a man make an eye, and have no rational grounds for *belief*, that a man ever made one."

"Design proves to us agency *only* IN AS FAR as we see or know it."

In the foregoing examples, are several contradictions and surdities. First it is asserted, that design proves to us agency only in as far as we see or know it. That is, we first see or know a thing, and then convince ourselves there something which proves nothing about it. In the as placed in contrast with this, it is said, that "we know very that is, we have rational grounds for belief, that man embalm mummies." Here, our *knowing* a thing is represented as rational belief. This, however, is neither according

common acceptance of the term knowledge, nor according to fact. Knowledge is more than rational belief: it is consciousness or experience. Let us, however, keep the other explanation in view, and see how it chimes with the rest; which explanation is, that knowledge is rational belief. Now read:—"An embalmed mummy is evidence to us of human agency, because we have rational grounds of belief, that man embalms mummies;"—that is to say, we believe that man embalms mummies, *because* we believe that man embalms mummies. This is no caricature. We are told that we rationally believe that man embalms mummies. Why? Because mummies are an evidence that man embalms them. But why? Because we rationally believe that man embalms them.—Thus the belief is made the cause of the evidence, and the evidence the cause of the belief. Thus we believe because we believe.—Again, we are told that we must *see* or *know*, or have rational grounds for *belief*, in order to believe a thing. But seeing or knowing would exclude belief. Not to dwell on this, however, let us recall the definition of the term *know*, which, just back, was laid up for special use. That definition was—*rational belief*. So, then, we must have grounds for rational belief, or have grounds for rational belief, in order that we may have grounds for rational belief. We must *believe*, or we must *believe*, in order that we may *believe*. These are the legitimate consequences of my opponent's various statements and explanations. Nor do I present this view of the case for the purpose of ridicule, but that I may set forth its absurdities in the strongest possible light. If I advance absurd propositions, I wish to have them exposed in the same manner, that I may see and abandon them.

But he finds it amazingly difficult to believe in a God, because he has not "a material form of flesh and blood, visible to the sight, sensible to the touch, with a local habitation," &c., &c. He does not once seem to consider, that, in urging this difficulty, he involves himself therein, as well as others. Pray, what material form has mind? How tall is thought? How thick volition? How wide recollection? How long perception? How heavy imagination? Or, to speak of the energies of nature—How large is magnetism? Of what colour is attraction? Of what shape is repulsion? Where dwells the efficient cause of second causes—that unknown, blind, mysterious, all-pervading energy or power which sceptics themselves admit? What "material form of flesh and blood" has IT? Is it visible to the sight? sensible to the touch? located in a habitation? Has it limbs with which it moves; momentum with which it acts? Can they take cognizance of it with their senses? Can they see how it exists? how it pervades the universe? how it operates without material organs? Has it body? shape? colour? motion? Is it not invisible, impalpable, inaudible, imperceptible, immaterial? They see only the *effects* of the power; but those effects are not the power

itself. They see matter; but matter is not the power. Still, a power they admit, of a power they conceive, think, and speak—yea, though they cannot explain it; though they cannot comprehend it; though for it they have no prototype: “in a word, though it has not one of the attributes, conditions, qualities, modifications, or phases, that constitute what men call *entity* or *existence*.” Here they waive all difficulties, and talk of immateriality as fluently as the veriest believer on the footstool. Men, if disposed, may cavil at any thing. They may, as they have done, deny even their own existence. They may raise objections in every case, and doubt their own senses, because those objections cannot be obviated. But is this *reasonable*? That’s the question. What though we cannot explain the divine existence? Neither can sceptics explain the universe without one. Our system involves one difficulty; theirs, difficulties, nay, absurdities, without number.

“Admit a God, all other mysteries cease;
Deny him, all is mystery beside.”

Admit a God, we have at once an adequate cause for every effect: deny him, and we have effects innumerable without any cause. We have all the *results* of omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and infinite benevolence, without *any* power, *any* wisdom, *any* presence, *any* benevolence. To say that a *cause* is uncaused, is no contradiction; but to say that *effects* are uncaused, *is* so. Inasmuch as something exists, something must have eternally existed. And be that something what it may, whether matter or God, it is not an effect, seeing its existence, being eternal, is uncaused. But whatever has a beginning must have a cause, and an efficient, adequate cause. Mere power is adequate to the production of *physical* effects, but not to the production of *intelligent* effects. Nor could mere *intelligence* produce *effects*. Intelligence and power must therefore combine, to produce *intelligent effects*. Those who admit a power, do indeed admit a cause, though an inadequate one, for the *intelligent* effects every where observable. Were the universe chaos, there would then be reason to admit a power only. But the admission even of this would be the admission of a God with one attribute; for, after all we hear of the power that operates in the universe, the laws of nature, &c., &c., it signifies nothing, without the admission of something besides nature itself. Is *nature* the *laws* of nature? Is *nature* the *powers* of nature? This would be a contradiction. Nature—that is, matter—is not power. When the mighty *avalanche* reposes on the towering summit of the Alps, it is powerless and harmless; but when it makes the fearful launch, it spreads terror and desolation. Yet even the avalanche is not the power *th* itself. A mysterious, incomprehensible *something else*. Here then we have the sceptic’s God. Yes, the *sc* a real existence, distinct from nature, but yet a

knowledge and every thing else but power. To this *we* add intelligence, goodness, &c. This is God! This the uncreated, incomprehensible being in which we believe. And whether, when the universe is taken into consideration, it is the more rational to believe in this God or the God of scepticism, judge thou. To me it appears far more reasonable, to suppose an intelligent cause for intelligent effects, than an unintelligent one. The one or the other we must suppose, if we reason at all.

I do most seriously object to one position in the reply to my last, viz., that we are to doubt what we can't unriddle. What! sir; "an *atom of earth*, who can see but *one small speck of one link* of the mighty chain of all causes and effects," assuming to himself the wisdom to *unriddle* all *realities*! (Most assuredly he would not be understood to *doubt realities*; and therefore he can, according to his own rule, unriddle them.) Then, sir, unriddle that "mighty chain of causes and effects" of which so small a part can be seen. Unriddle the sceptic's Energy or Power. Unriddle thyself. Explain the energies of nature. Show us the main-spring of the wheels of the universe. Tell us the "*why* and the *wherefore*" of gravitation, of magnetism, of electricity, of cohesion, of attraction, of repulsion. "Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when the foundations of the earth were laid? Declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days, and caused the day-spring to know his place? Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his suns? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart? Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich? Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south? Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it."

But, sir, though we can unriddle but "a speck" of the universe, that speck we *can* unriddle. We are not omniscient, but we know a little. We have a little *real knowledge*. And what we do know, we could no more than know, *were* we omniscient. A child knows the alphabet as well as if he understood all literature. To comprehend infinity would be, to be

infinite ourselves. But to believe that there *is* an infinite being, is no more difficult than for one individual to believe that there is another superior to himself. Now, though we cannot see the whole universe, we can see the whole of some of its perfect parts. We can see a whole tree, a whole animal, a whole man; which are as evident proofs of the omnipotence and omniscience of their author, as the universe would be, could we see it all.

We have seen that something must have been eternal. This, then, obviates all objections as to the eternity of God. But if eternal, he is uncreated, uncaused. And if uncaused, he has *no* cause, and is therefore not an effect. This then is the reason why I am satisfied to conceive a God without a maker, although I can conceive nothing else to be so. I could indeed conceive the universe to be so, were it an intelligent existence; for then could I see an adequate cause for its intelligent operations: that is, I could, under such circumstances, so conceive it to be, unless I knew it to have had a beginning. But I cannot conceive any thing to be without a maker that *has* a beginning.

I have said, that the design apparent in the universe is an evidence of a designer; and I have been told in reply, that if appearance of design is evidence of a designer in one case, it is evidence thereof in another, and therefore proves that God had a designer or maker. How so? What appearance of contrivance or design is there in God? In his mind, says the objector. How in his mind? Why, there is harmony, order, intelligence there. Yes, but it was not *these qualities themselves*, as existing in a being, but the *manifestations* thereof, as displayed in the organization, &c., of *matter*, which I made the proof of a designer. The argument consists in this: that, as mere matter is void of intelligence, it could exhibit no indications thereof, save in so far as made to exhibit the same by an intelligent being; and that, as the universe *is* mere matter, and *does* exhibit those indications, it must have had an intelligent author. The *absurdity* of which I spake, lay in making the *mind* of a being the *manifestation* of mind, and so an evidence of another designer. True, the *human* faculty of thinking has a designer; but the way by which we know this, is not that man exhibits evidence that he *has* such a faculty, but because that faculty has a beginning. But in his *material organization*, he exhibits those evidences of design which mere matter cannot of itself manifest, and which he himself has no agency in producing. Thus, man in his organization exhibits the mind of his creator; in his actions, his own; and in his own, his creator's;—and that for the *sole reason*, that it has a beginning, and therefore has an author.

In controversy, it is always considered allowable, to press home upon an opponent any difficulties resulting from his own positions. Nor is it for that opponent to leave them unset. He is bound to abide by their consequences, and stand with them, or make a recantation. It is by no means *que* that *keeping on the pivot* between the two sides of a que

and deciding upon neither, secures an individual from absurd consequences. For a man to say, that he neither admits nor denies that two and one are three, ought not to screen him from some criticism, though he is not so *extremely* outrageous as the one who should say they do *not* make three. To apply this remark to the case in hand: I contend that there are in the universe all the evidences of design, and therefore of a designer—a God—which there possibly could be. For a rational being, with these evidences before him, merely *not to deny* a God, is not enough: he is bound to acknowledge him, or to shew positively that those evidences do *not* prove his existence. He is bound to show that all possible *appearances* of design do not *prove* a design, and of course a designer; and, therefore, that all possible appearances of design can be produced by a cause *void* of design; and, consequently, that the works of men, manifest as much appearance thereof as they may, do not prove them to be possessed of the same; yea, though we were to see them perform those works; inasmuch as an *intelligent* cause can produce appearances of *intelligence*. And now, sir, obviate these difficulties, or admit a God. Do not misunderstand me. In requiring the positive admission or denial of a God, I do not mean that we are to *know* how the case is. The very question under discussion is, whether there is reason to *believe* in a God. It is therefore unnecessary, so far as this is concerned, to have “spiritual eyes to see, or telescopes to enlarge, or ships to carry us whither we can *substantiate* our theories.” We are not now inquiring whether we can do this, but whether there is reason for the theory itself. And as Newton and Columbus formed their theories without literal telescopes and ships, so may we ours without spiritual ones.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

TO ORIGEN BACHELER.

LETTER IV.

March 12, 1831,

Those who have lived only in the atmosphere of the religious world very commonly conclude, as you do, that the chief source of scepticism is the fear of a day of judgment; but a personal acquaintance with the enlightened portion of the sceptical world would speedily convince them that the opinion is groundless, and that it is the inconsistent mysteries, not the threatened retributions, of religion, that are the fertile source of unbelief. This and a thousand other mutual misconceptions

will continue, so long as any honest belief is looked upon as a crime, and so long as we are taught to regard as heathen men and publicans those who conscientiously differ from us in opinion.

The learned *St. Anselmus*,* the ingenious *Des Cartes*, and (in our days) a large portion of the respectable Society of Friends, support your argument of the existence of God *by experience*; or, as the more orthodox might express it, from an innate idea of a Supreme First Cause. The argument, if it be not conclusive, is at least unanswerable. When a man says to me, "I feel God," I shall never deny that he does; my only reply is, "I do not feel him."†

As regards the *watch-argument*, (first started, I believe, by *Condillac*, taken up and elaborately illustrated by *Paley*, and triumphantly insisted on by all natural theologians) I see little necessity for adding much to what I have already said. I have admitted to you that we see‡ around us what has been called a *fitness of things*; an arrangement of phenomena, which, to a certain extent, *resembles* human design, yet is the work of no human designer. You push the analogical argument. You say: "This *fitness* (of the just-formed eye, for instance, to the previously existing light, of the newly-created ear to the sounds that are to surround it, of the digestive viscera of the infant to the milk that is in its mother's breast to nourish it, and so of a

* He was Archbishop of Canterbury in 1093. See, for the argument alluded to, *Brucker*, vol. iii., p. 665. The French philosopher may or may not have borrowed the idea from him.

† Should the whole of the Society of Friends, as a portion of them have already done, revert to what seems to have been the original heresy of their forefathers, the founders of the society, and declare Deity to be, "the light within," "God within the breast," or, as without a metaphor it would be expressed, "a guiding consciousness of rectitude"—then to a Quaker I should at once admit, that I do feel God; that I desire, at all times, to listen, in singleness of heart, to his voice, and to obey his laws alone. In this sense, to live without God, would also be indeed to live without hope, in the world.

But as I conceive *you* to mean by God a creating being, existing separate from matter and from man's consciousness, my reply to you is, that I do not feel God. And it is of a God, according to this your definition, that I speak with you throughout this argument.

‡ Your verbal criticism of my expression "we see men design," which you say ought to be, "we see men *execute* their designs," is probably, in philological strictness, correct: but surely the expression is sufficiently current to pass unchallenged. In *strictness* we cannot say, "I saw the wind blow down a tree;" but we say so every day, nevertheless.

You shall have the full, unchallenged benefit of your ingenious quibble about knowledge and rational belief and embalmed mummies. All I ask is, that our readers will refer to the sentences which you have set up in juxtaposition, and read them *in connection with the context*. They cannot then fail to perceive, that the *it*, in the first quoted sentence of the left hand column, refers, not to the *word design*, but to the *whole of a previous sentence*. I confess that my perceptions are too obtuse to see any thing but common sense in the other so grievously impugned sentences. There is not very absurd, I think, in "believing because we have rational ground belief."

thousand other things)—this *convenient or harmonious concatenation of phenomena*," you argue, "would, if apparent in the works of man, appear to us a *pre-arrangement to effect an intention*, and would therefore be to us an *indication of human purpose*. Why not conclude at once," you ask, "that this fitness of natural things is purpose, and has for its cause a purposer? Some apparent purpose proceeds from will, from intelligent intention, from *mind*; why not *all* purpose? Since it is so on earth, why not in heaven?"

If I could say *why not*, I must be possessed of that very knowledge the possession of which I disclaim.

"But is not the argument," you insist, "in itself conclusive?"

It *can*, in the very nature of things, be only *probability*, let us make the most of it.

"But may we not reasonably believe, that all fitness of things, natural as artificial, is the work of mind?"

I demur to the conclusion. I deny our right to stretch analogy from earth to heaven. Here *upon earth*, analogy is all very well. It ekes out our discoveries, and helps us to much real knowledge and to some unreal theories. It is a convenient and tolerably safe (if even fallible) guide. The order and similarity of various phenomena authorise conclusions, which, if not mathematically demonstrated, have very satisfactory probabilities in their favour. But our right, (or rather our power) to predicate regarding unperceived things and causes, ceases, when the scene is laid beyond the hemisphere of our human lot. Elsewhere, things *may* be as on earth, and they *may* be very different. Imagination may conceive them similar; but analogy can be no guide to the conceit. Comparison cannot stretch its arch, like the rainbow, from this lower world into the skies; or, if it does, its conclusions are like that rainbow's colours, if as beautiful also as changeful and evanescent. While we cling to our mother earth, like the fabled giant of Libya, we are safe; but if we suffer the Hercules of superstition to raise us into the air, our reason is crushed to death in his arms. When the wings of Fancy bear us to other worlds, analogy turns to chance, words to sounds, and judgment to imagination. The chasm is too wide, and Mirza's bridge, with its hundred arches, scarce stretches one little span into the unknown deep. Our human eyes cannot follow the great chain up into spiritual regions: its links are lost in infinity; and we have no Jacob's ladder (except it be in dream) on which to ascend in pursuit of its termination.

Some microscopic speck of an insect—a mote on one of the teeth of one of the minutest wheels of a watch—does indeed see *something*, and that something it could do no more than see were it allwise; it has *some* real knowledge, and this it could "do no more than know," were it a God. Is this a reason why it should be deemed capable of imagining a watch-maker? It seems to me a strange one.

I think it wise, modest, rational, for us human specks to let the great watch and all speculations about its secret springs and its unknown maker alone. The real knowledge we have is barely enough to cast a glimmering blaze over human affairs; and we must needs test its efficacy in lighting up the vast obscurity of spiritual hypothesis! We blunder every day and hour in our estimate of human motives and our solutions of earthly problems; yet nothing will suit us but to try our reason in questions about the arcana of the universe and the designs of an immaterial God!

The existence of the realities around me I perceive; many of the properties of these realities I perceive: their immediate causes I often perceive. *So far* I unriddle all this; and *so far* I understand. The ultimate causes of these realities I perceive not, and regarding them I suspend judgment. When a Job asks me, in poetical language, "who meted out the earth and laid its corner-stone," I reply, that as I "know not the ordinances of heaven," nor "the dominion thereof on the earth," he is asking me questions which both he and I shall be puzzled to answer; and I remind him, as *Minutius Felix* did the heathen: "*Unusquisque vestrum non cogitat, prius se debere Deos nosse quam colere.*"*

Let us, in the name of modesty and common sense, since we cannot answer Job's questions, cease teasing ourselves about them. Let us cease urging each other to presumptuous decisions be they positive or negative. It is a poor reason for admitting one mystery, that we cannot explain another. Let us unpretendingly suspend judgment regarding both. Let us study arithmetic, if we will; for to doubt that two and one make three, is unnecessary, so long as we can count three: but ere we study theology, let us take the trouble to ascertain, whether we can ever comprehend even its numeration table.

If other evidence were wanting in proof how little trustworthy are men's solutions of theological problems, it might almost suffice to enumerate the chameleon conceptions that have filled all books of divinity up to the present day.†

But it is not theology alone that undoubtingly assumes, instead of modestly pausing on the confines of human researches. Science, too, has learnt to theorize and imagine. Some votaries of science have talked as unmeaningly of natural energies, as

* "*Not one of you reflects, that you ought to know your Gods before you worship them.*" Felix was an African lawyer, who flourished A. D. 207, and the above is an extract from his eloquent dialogue, in defence of the Christian religion. He surely forgot what he was defending, and that his argument cut both ways.

† For the curious in these matters, I have briefly compiled, in the article entitled "God," (see *Appendix*, note A.) some of the more prominent among these conceptions in various ages. The data may there also be found which induce me to attribute to Socrates the modest doubts of scepticism.

ever believer did of a God. Attraction, repulsion, affinity, momentum, and so on, are convenient and rational terms when employed to signify *attributes or qualities of matter*. But when we begin to personify them, to embody them as self-existent powers, and to picture forth their separate, immaterial entity, we are involved in the theology of science, which is quite as obscure as any other.* To such theological naturalists you may put your questions about the size of magnetism and the shape of repulsion; and perhaps they will answer them. For myself, be pleased to recollect, I disclaim all power to explain mysteries, theological or scientific.

When two bodies are drawn together without physical agency, we say, *attraction is the cause*. We are very apt to believe ourselves exceedingly wise in saying so. Yet, if we mean by attraction any thing more than a certain *regular mode of action*, a *rule or law* (that is, a *uniform sequence*) of motion; if we begin to imagine attraction a fluid, or a gas, or any other material existence, we are out on the ocean of imagination, and have given the helm to fancy.

Now if you take all the laws of the universe, that is, all the modes of action or uniform sequences of motion apparent in nature, and choose to personify the great code, (if I may so express myself) and call it God; the name, for aught I know, may, (like the word attraction) be convenient; but assuredly the idea is abundantly heretical. God, so defined, means only, *the manner in which things act*. It is idle to urge me to explain this "sceptic's God," when I have told you fifty times already, that I have never pretended to unriddle or expound the universal laws.

My reasons, then, for "keeping on the pivot" are short and simple. I *cannot trust to analogy*, when, like the mythological Titans, it would scale the empyrean: for I see it, like them, fall crushed and vanquished; buried beneath the mountains of mystery, or whelmed in the great ocean of ignorance. I cannot trust to human senses and human judgment in any thing but earthly researches; and I have, and can obtain, no other senses and no other judgment, the which to employ in spiritual investigations.

Are you still dissatisfied? Will you not accept my protestations of diffidence? Do you insist that I should weigh in the scales of my human reason, such as they are, the probabilities of the universe, and the mysteries of its government? Be it so then, and if the attempt incur the charge of presumption, I pray you to bear in mind at whose door lies the blame.

* As one of a thousand fanciful scientific hypotheses, might be quoted the theory which asserts chemical affinity to be to inanimate bodies what mental affections are to human beings. Thus some Thomas Moore among these imaginative naturalists might write us a pretty poem, and entitle it—not "Loves of the Angels," but "Loves of the Minerals." And, to be sure, why not one as well as the other?

A great being, you assert, first created, has ever preserved, and now governs, the universe. That being, you say, is all-powerful, all-wise, and all-good. You bid me look on this glorious world of his, and ask me, if every thing, from a circling planet down to a slender grassblade, speak not of such a God.

Does it so? I walk through the world with my eyes and ears and heart open, and I ask myself, DOES IT SO? I do indeed see some, say even *much* happiness; and if the draught were unmixed, I might suppose the cup to be from the hand of omnipotent goodness. But do I see, do I hear, do I feel, no misery? I may wrap myself up, it is true, in the easy mantle of indifference, or may look at the world and its doings through the sunny Claude Lorraine glass of optimism; I may sit down by my own fireside, and, in a cheerful moment, almost forget

How many feel, this very instant, death
And all the sad variety of pain—
How many sink in the devouring flood,
Or more devouring flame—how many bleed,
By shameful variance betwixt man and man—
How many pine in want and dungeon glooms,
Shut from the common air, and common use
Of their own limbs—how many drink the cup
Of baneful grief, or eat the bitter bread
Of misery—sore pierc'd by wintry winds,
How many shrink into the sordid hut
Of cheerless poverty—how many shake
With all the fiercer tortures of the mind,
Unbounded passion, madness, guilt, remorse;
Whence tumbled headlong from the heights of life
They furnish matter for the tragic muse—
Ev'n in the vale where Wisdom loves to dwell,
With friendship, peace, and contemplation joined,
How many, rack'd with honest passions, droop
In deep retired distress—how many stand
Around the death-bed of their dearest friends,
And point the parting anguish.

—I may cease to remember how the strong oppress the weak, and the brutal lord it over the gentle-hearted; how the lion tears the limbs of the peaceful deer, and the wolf sucks the blood of the inoffensive sheep; how fraud glitters in the palace, and honesty droops in the hovel; how idleness revels in luxury, and labour pines in want. I may blot from my memory the red records of history; the wars and treacheries that have drenched the green earth with blood; the superstitions that have clouded the fair skies with the smoke of human hecatombs. Nay, I may close my eyes even on the wrong and outrage that stalk, in our own day, through our own republic; on the fate of the enslaved African and of the hunted Indian; on the victories of intemperance, and the triumphs of intrigue.

For a passing moment of easy, unsympathising competency, when no sorrow presses on my own heart and no danger threatens my own threshold, I *may* forget even facts so notorious as these; and may thoughtlessly rejoice, that all is well and

wisely and happily ordered. But is human misery the less real, because it falls not at *every* moment in our eyes and on our hearts? Can we resist the conviction, that suffering, that pain, that misery, that evils of every form and colour, abound throughout the earth?—

—You task my human reason to grapple, as it may, with the subject; and you require that I should reply to the question, whether such a world bear not the speaking impress of ineffable goodness and omnipotent power. Needs it that I answer, NO?

I may conceive (for what frightful demon will not fancy conjure up!) a creating God all-powerful, and *deliberately willing evil and suffering*: or (and this *is* my conception when I picture him forth at all) I may imagine him benevolent, *and of limited power*. Omnipotent AND benevolent he cannot be. Omnipotence *could*, and benevolence *would*, have prevented evil.

This dilemma is as old as the days of Epicurus, and as knotty as it is old. If there be an avenue of escape for the orthodox apologist of deity, I have yet to learn what it is.

Must I be told that we cannot know that evil *is* evil, or that vice and misery are not blessings in disguise? In the name of common sense, what *can* we know, then? Not know it? not know, when the limbs are stretched on the rack, that torture is an evil? not know, when the infant is dashed on the stones, or when gentle woman is butchered in cold blood, that the butchery is a crime? not know whether malice and jealousy, whether the iron hand of despotism and the brutal passions of ignorance, are blessings or curses? Do we know that the sun-beam is warm, and the snow-drift cold? Not more clearly, not more positively, than we see, than we feel, than we know, that vice is no blessing, and misery no good. Theology may say they are: nature speaks louder than theology. The sophist may tread down the distinctions between good and evil, and appeal even from the bar of human perception: our feelings will build up again the great wall of partition, and our hearts deny the right of appeal. Crime *is* evil; to be lamented, to be avoided, to be extirpated, if it can be: misery *is* evil; to be shunned, to be shaken from us, to be warded off, by every possible effort, from all our fellow creatures.

—But why reason the matter? Will the boldest enthusiast act upon his doubts? Will he attempt to spread abroad among his brethren these same disguised blessings? Or, if reason and liberty at last extend their peaceful dominion over the earth, will he indeed sit down in sorrow, and lament that the mysterious sources of good are fast disappearing from among mankind?

And who are they who would persuade us to such scrupulous scepticism, in despite of our own eyes and hearts? Who are they who would have us unbelievers, even in the broadest daylight of reason, and in the very noontide of actual perception? The same who are willing to trust that very reason and those

identical perceptions, as guides in a pilgrimage to other worlds, and pilots during a voyage of discovery in search of omnipotence!

But again, if our senses be not guarantee to us that evil *is* evil, who shall assure us that good *is* good? By what right (if reason's magnetic needle is to be set aside)—by what right shall we assert, that pleasures and virtues are not mere gilded curses? that our gentlest impulses are not given us only to be outraged? our noblest passions only to be seared and chilled? our highest talents only to be abused and perverted? our fairest hopes only to end in disappointment? If the history of genius and the fate of virtue are to be received in proof, the melancholy conceit would not want for specious argument in its favour.

But sufficient of this. We are blind and ignorant enough—the misery of this world be the proof!—but if we are conscious of our own existence, we are conscious also, that light is not darkness, and that evil is not good.

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN

LETTER V.

New-York, March 19, 1831.

SIR,

I repeat what I have already said, that *some* men wish to disbelieve in a God, because they fear it would fare poorly with themselves, in case there should be one. The proof of this assertion consists in the fact, that some who renounce scepticism declare it to have been so with themselves.

By an *experimental* knowledge of God, I do not mean an *innate idea* of him, but that knowledge which is produced by the operation of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration, which in scripture is thus described: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the spirit." Now, that some do thus know God by experience, we have not only the testimony of scripture, but of living, experimental witnesses to prove. Here then is proof of God's existence of the strongest kind. Nor is it in the least invalidated by the assertion of others, that they themselves experience nothing of this nature. This only proves that *they* do not, and not that *others* do not. As to the quaker, or rather Hicksite, idea of a God, if nothing more is to be understood thereby than the light within *merely*, to the exclusion of a God

without, it is neither more nor less than atheism. To know this Hicksite God, is therefore to know no God at all.

My comments on the sentences which in my last I placed in juxtaposition, were no "quibbles," but fair conclusions. I have only to request the reader attentively to re-examine them.

I would ask, sir, the meaning of the following sentence:—"If we mean by attraction any thing more than a certain regular mode of action, a rule or law (that is, a uniform sequence) of motion,—we are out on the ocean of imagination, and have given the helm to fancy." What! is *attraction* the *mode* of action? I have been accustomed to consider it its *cause*. But if attraction is the *mode* of action, pray what is the *cause* of action?—or has action indeed *no* cause? It would be a strange sight to see a statue walk! But why, if no power or cause is requisite to its motion?

Again. If men are to doubt what they can't unriddle, I should suppose it high time for my opponent to doubt "the universal laws," after having "fifty times" told me that he pretends not to unriddle or expound *them*.

It seems to be conceded, that there is in natural things an *appearance* of design. And pray tell me what more than this there is in artificial things. Surely we do not see design itself in any case. When we see a man perform a work, we merely see the agent by which that work is performed; but we do not see his mind or design, any more than we see mind when we behold the sun, the clouds, and the earth, operating in the production of food. What then, in *reason's* name I ask, renders *appearance* of design an evidence thereof in the one case, and not in the other? The seeing of a man perform a work, is not the proof of *design itself*, but only that the design is *in him*. Were he to perform a work which should have no appearance of design, the seeing of him perform that work would be no evidence of design in him. Whence it follows, that design must first be apparent in a work, in order to the proof of design in the workman, and consequently, that the *evidence of design itself* exists in the work. Now if it exists in the work, it matters not whether we see the workman or not; the *appearance* of design is still there, which appearance is the evidence, and the only evidence. This evidence does not indeed show us *what* man's design it is, but it shows us that there is *design*, and therefore, that it is the design of *some* one. Now the works of nature have this appearance: this is admitted. They have therefore all the evidence of design which any thing has. Consequently, design is proved in their case, if in any case whatever. If we cannot prove it here, we can prove it no where; for, if appearance of design is not infallible proof thereof, it can never be absolute proof in any case. If an un-intelligent cause or energy can produce appearances of design, then an *idiot* (who is just such an energy) can produce those appearances. And if an idiot can do this, we cannot prove

that *any* man is not an idiot. I defy any one to prove the existence of intelligence in any case whatever, unless *appearance* of intelligence is *infallible* proof. But if it *is* infallible proof, then it proves design in *natural* as well as artificial things. Could we see God himself incarnate, applying literal hands to the wheels of nature, thereby causing all the operations and results which now occur throughout the vast universe, this would only prove to us that the being who causes these things had become visible, not that he is intelligent; for the proof of his intelligence would consist in the *appearance* of intelligence in his *works*. Nor would this *appearance* be proof, unless it is certain, that wherever it exists, there intelligence is concerned. Thus we see that the sceptic's rejection of the evidence of the divine existence, as furnished by the appearance of design in nature, not only prevents the proof of design in all other existing cases, but would prevent us from proving *God* an intelligent being, could we actually see him—yea, see him causing the operations of nature—and even see him creating a universe! This is scepticism followed out to its legitimate termination. Nor is it overdone. The case is as clear as the rule of proportion in mathematics, and may be thus briefly stated and wrought:—If appearance of design is not a *sure* evidence thereof, design cannot be proved in *any* case. If it *is* a sure evidence, then it is a proof in *all* cases. If there is no God, appearance of design is produced by an unintelligent cause; for nature has this appearance. If an unintelligent cause can produce this, a *man* without intelligence can produce it. And if such a man can produce it, we have no means for distinguishing a man of sense from a fool.

Inasmuch as it is conceded, that there are appearances of design in nature, it is not necessary to the argument to prove this. Nevertheless, that this proposition may not only be admitted, but realized in all its overwhelming profusion of evidence, it may be useful to dwell for a few moments on this point.

It is scarcely necessary to designate instances in the works of nature, in which there is an appearance of purpose; for every thing has this appearance. I will however mention several cases as samples.

First. The adaptation of the covering of animals to the climates in which they live. Northern animals have thicker and warmer coats of fur or hair than southern ones. And here it should be remarked, that man, the only creature capable of clothing himself, is the only one that is not clothed by nature. Singular discrimination and care indeed, for non-intelligence!

Second. The adaptation of animals to the elements in which they live—fish to the water, other animals to the air. Would not an unintelligent energy or power, (for a *power* all must acknowledge,) be as likely to form the organs of a fish for air as for water?

Third. The necessity which man has for sustenance, &c., and the supply of that necessity by nature. Here let it be noted how many things must act in unison, to produce the necessary result. The earth must nourish the seed, the sun must warm it, the rain must moisten it, and man must have the strength to cultivate it,—and the organs to eat it, and the stomach to digest it, and the blood vessels to circulate it, and so on. Is it credible, that all these things should *happen* without design?

Fourth. The *pre*-adaptation of the infant to the state of things into which it enters at birth. The eye is exactly suited to the light, the ear to sound, the nose to smell, the palate to taste, the lungs to the air, &c., &c., &c. How is it possible to see no design in this *pre*-adaptation, so curious, so complicated, and in so many particulars?

Fifth. The milk of animals, so suitable for the nourishment of their young; provided just in season; provided without contrivance on the part of the parent;—and sought for without instruction or experience on the part of its offspring!—and all by chance!!!

Sixth. The different sexes. In this case, as in the rest, there is perfect adaptation, which displays evident design. And there is more. What, I ask, is there in nature, to cause a difference in the sexes? Why are not all, either males or females?—or rather a compound? This case, then, I consider not only an evidence of design, but likewise an evidence of the special and continual *volition* of the creator. And here I would notice the wise provision of divine providence, in securing the propagation of the human race, by connecting such pleasures with sexual intercourse, as not only to be an inducement thereto, but so strong an inducement, as to overbalance the pangs of parturition, and the countless cares and responsibilities devolving on parents.

Seventh. The destitution of horns on the calf, and of teeth in the suckling. All other parts are perfect at the very first; but were calves and sucklings to have teeth and horns, what sore annoyances would these appendages prove to their dams and dames! How is it, that all the necessary parts of the young are thus perfect at the first, and their annoying parts unformed till circumstances render them *no* annoyance—unformed at the time they are not needed, and produced when they are, for defence and mastication? Who can fail of discerning intelligence here?

Eighth. The teats of animals. These bear a general proportion to the number of young which they are wont to have at a time. Those that have few young have few of these appurtenances; those that have many, many. Were these animals to make preparations themselves in this respect, how could things be more appropriate?

Ninth. The pea and the bean. The pea-vine, unable to stand erect of itself, has tendrils with which to cling to a sup-

porter; but the bean-stalk, self-sustained, has nothing of the kind.

Tenth. The pumpkin. This does not grow on the oak, to fall on the *tender* head of the wiseacre who reposes in its shade, *reasoning* that it should grow there rather than where it does, because, forsooth, the oak would be able to sustain it. And were he to undertake to set the other works of providence to rights which he now considers wrong, 'tis a chance if he would not get many a thump upon his pate, ere he should get the universe arranged to his mind. And if, before completing his undertaking, he should not find it the easier of the two to arrange his mind to the universe, it would be because *what little* brains he *has* would get thumped out of his cranium altogether!

Eleventh. The great energies of nature. To suppose the existence of *powers* as the cause of the operations of nature—powers destitute of life, and, at the same time, self-moving, and acting upon matter without the intervention of extrinsic agency—is just as irrational as to suppose such a power in a machine, and is a gross absurdity, and a self-contradiction. But to suppose that these lifeless energies, even if possessed of such qualities, could, void of intelligence, produce *such* effects as *are* produced in the universe, requires credulity capable of believing any thing.

Twelfth. The whole universe, whether considered in its elementary or its organized state. From the simple gas to the tender plant, and onward up to the sturdy oak—from the least insect up to man, there is skill the most consummate, design the most clear. What substance, useless as it may be when uncombined with other substances, does not manifest design in its affinity to those substances, by a union with which it is rendered useful? What plant, what shrub, what tree, has not organization and arrangement the most perfect imaginable? What insect so minute that contains not, within its almost invisible exterior, adjustment of part to part in the most exact order throughout all its complicated system, infinitely transcending the most ingenious productions of art; and the most appropriate adaptation of all those parts to its peculiar mode of existence? Rising in the scale of sensitive being, let us consider the beast of the forest, in whose case, without microscopic aid, we have the subject more accessible. Is he a beast of prey? Has the God of nature given him an instinctive thirst for blood? Behold then his sharp-sighted organs of vision for descrying his victim afar, his agile limbs for pursuit, his curved and pointed claws for seizing and tearing his prey, his sharp-edged teeth for cutting through its flesh, his firm jaws for gripping, crushing, and devouring it, and his intestines for digesting raw flesh! But is he a graminivorous animal? Does he subsist on grass and herb? Behold then his clumsy limbs and his clawless hoofs, his blunt teeth and his herb-digesting stomach!

So perfect is the correspondence between one part and another—so exactly adapted are all the parts to the same general objects—so wonderful is the harmony, and so definite and invariable the purpose, obtaining throughout the whole—that it is necessary to see but a footstep, or even a bone, to be able to decide the nature and construction of the animal that imprinted that footstep, or that possessed that bone! Ascending still higher in the scale, we come at last to man—man, the highest, noblest workmanship of God on earth, the lord of this sphere terrene, for whose behoof all mundane things exist. In common with all other animals, he has that perfect adaptation of part to part, and of all the parts to general objects, which demonstrate consummate wisdom in the cause which thus adapted them. His eyes are so placed as to look the same way in which his feet are placed to walk, and his hands to toil. His feet correspond with each other, being both placed to walk in the same direction, and with their corresponding sides towards one another, without which he would hobble, even if he could walk at all. The mouth is placed in the fore part of the head, by which it can receive food and drink from the hands. But the hands themselves—who can but admire their wonderful utility? To what purpose are they not adapted? Man, who has many ends to accomplish, in common with the beast of the field—who has hunger to alleviate, thirst to slake, &c., &c., the same as the former, has likewise other and higher ends, for the attainment of which he is peculiarly qualified, by means of *hands*. Adapted by his constitution to inhabit all climes, he has hands to adapt his clothing to the same, whether torrid, temperate, or frigid. Possessed of the knowledge of the utility of the soil, he has hands to cultivate it. Located far distant oftentimes from the running stream, these hands enable him to disembowel the earth, and there find an abundant supply of the all-necessary fluid. Endued with rational ideas, pen in *hand*, he can transmit them to his fellow far away, or to generations unborn. Heir and lord of earth and ocean, his hands enable him to possess and control the same; without which, notwithstanding all his reason, he could do neither, but would have to crouch beneath the superior strength of the brute, and fly for shelter to crags inaccessible to his beastly sovereign. But useful after all as are these appendages, how very like the paws of beasts in this respect would they become, were man devoid of reason. Thus we see that the only creature that has the reason to manage the world, has the physical organization to do it. No *beast* with man's reason could do this; and no *man* with the mere instinct of a brute could do it. How marvellous then this adaptation! Yea, how wondrous the adaptation of every thing! And how astonishing that any man, with all these things in view, can for one moment forbear to admit a God! Let him try a *chance experiment*. Let him take the letters of the alphabet, and throw them about promiscuously; and then see how long

ere they would move of their own accord, and arrange themselves into words and sentences. Yea, he may avail himself of the whole benefit of his scheme; he may have the advantage of an energy or power as a momentum, to set them in motion. He may put these letters into a box sufficiently large for the purpose, and then shake them as long as may seem him good; and when in this way they shall have become intelligible language, I will admit that he will have some reason for doubting a God. Nay, more. If this should seem too much like *artificial* mind, he may take some little animal, all constructed at his hands, and dismember its limbs, and dissect its body; and then within some vessel let him throw its various parts at random, and, seizing that vessel, shake it most lustily, till bone shall come to bone, joint to joint, and the little creature be restored to its original form. But if this could not be accomplished by mere power, without wisdom to direct, how could the original adjustment occur by chance? Nay, how could those very parts themselves be *formed* for adjustment one to another? Mathematicians tell us wondrous things in relation to these haphazard concerns. And they demonstrate their statements by what will not lie—figures. Their rule is this: that, as one thing admits of but one position, as, for example, *a*, so two things *a* and *b*, are capable of two positions, as *ab*, *ba*. But if a third be added, instead of their being susceptible of only one additional position, or three in all, they are capable of six. For example, *abc*, *acb*, *bac*, *bca*, *cab*, *cba*. Add another letter, *d*, and the four are capable of twenty-four positions, or variations, thus: *abcd*, *acbd*, *adbc*, *adcb*, *acdb*, *abdc*, *bacd*, *bcad*, *bdac*, *bdca*, *bcda*, *badc*, *cabd*, *cbad*, *cdab*, *dbac*, *cbda*, *cadb*, *dabc*, *dbac*, *dcab*, *dcba*, *dbca*, *dacb*. Thus, sir, we might go on. Merely adding another letter, *e*, and so making *five* instead of four, would increase the number of variations *five*-fold. They would then amount to one hundred and twenty. A single additional letter, *f*, making *six* in all, would increase this last sum of one hundred and twenty, *six*-fold, and would accordingly raise it to the amount of seven hundred and twenty. Add a *seventh* letter, *g*, and the last-named sum would be increased *seven*-fold, and thereby be raised to the number of five thousand and forty. An *eighth* letter, *h*, would increase said five thousand and forty, *eight*-fold, thus raising it to the sum of forty thousand, three hundred and twenty. A *ninth* letter, *i*, would increase the latter sum *nine*-fold, and so on to the end of the alphabet; when we should have the astonishing result, that, with only the twenty-six letters thereof, the different changes or variations which can be made with them, or the different positions in which they can be placed, amount to the immense number of six hundred and twenty thousand, four hundred and forty-eight trillions; four hundred and one thousand, seven hundred and thirty-three billions; two hundred and thirty-nine thousand, four hundred and thirty-nine millions; and three hundred

and sixty thousand!!! Hence it follows, that, were the letters of the alphabet to be thrown promiscuously into a vessel, to be afterwards shaken into order, by mere hap, their chance of being arranged, not to say into words and sentences, but into their alphabetical arrangements, would be only as 1 to 620,448,401,733,239,439,360,000. All this, sir, in the case of only twenty-six letters! Take now the human frame, with its innumerable bones, tendons, nerves, muscles, veins, arteries, ducts, glands, cartilages, &c., &c., &c., and, having dissected the same, throw those parts into one promiscuous mass; and how long, I ask, would it be, ere chance would put them all into their appropriate places, and form a perfect man? In this calculation, we are likewise to take into the account the chances of their being placed bottom upwards, or sideways, or wrong-side out, notwithstanding they might merely find their appropriate places. This would increase the chances against a well-formed system to an amount beyond all calculation or conception. In the case of the alphabet, the chances for the letters to fall bottom up, or aslant, are not included. And when we reflect that the blind goddess would have to contend against such fearful odds in the case of a single individual, how long are we to suppose it would be, ere from old chaos she could shake this mighty universe, with all its myriads upon myriads of existences, into the glorious order and beauty in which it now exists?

An atheistic naturalist's a fool.

He can't believe that two letters can be adjusted to each other without design; and yet he can believe all the foregoing incredibilities!

I might swell the list to a vast extent. I might bring into view the verdure of the earth, as being the most agreeable of all colours to the eye; the general diffusion of the indispensables and necessities of life, such as air, light, water, food, clothing, fuel, &c., while less necessary things, such as wines, spices, gold, silver, &c., are less diffused;—also, the infinite variety in things—in men, for instance—by which we can distinguish one from another, &c., &c., &c. But I forbear. If the cases adduced do not prove design, what *can* prove it? How *could* design be more apparent than in these instances? And is it reasonable to conclude that, where there are all possible appearances of design, still no design is there, or even that it is probable there is none?

I have said that there is as much evidence of purpose in the works of nature, as in those of art. I now say that there is more, *infinitely* more. Nay, should the wheels of Nature stop their revolutions, and her energies be palsied, and life and motion cease—even then would she exhibit incomparably greater evidence of design, in her mere construction and adaptation, than do the works of art. Shall we then be told, that when

she is in full operation, and daily producing millions upon millions of useful, of intelligent, of marvellous effects, she still manifests no marks of intelligence? In nature, we not only see all the works of art infinitely exceeded, but we see, as it were, those works self-moved, and performing their operations without external agency. To use a faint comparison, we see a factory in motion without water, wind, or steam, its cotton placing itself within the reach of the picker, the cards, the spinning-frame, and the loom, and turning out in rolls of cloth. Such virtually, nay, far more wonderful, is the universe. Not a thousandth part so unreasonable would it be, to believe a real factory of this description, were one to exist, to be a chance existence, as to believe this same universe so. Sooner could I suppose Nature herself possessed of intelligence, than admit the idea that there is *no* intelligence concerned in her organization and operations. There must be a mind within or without her, or else we have no data by which to distinguish mind. There must be a mind, or all the results of mind are produced without any. There must be a mind, or chaos produces order, blind power perfect effects, and non-intelligence the most admirable correspondence and harmony imaginable. Sceptics pride themselves much in their reason. They can't believe, they say, because it is unreasonable. *What* is unreasonable? to believe in a mind where there is every appearance thereof that can be? Is it more reasonable, then, to believe that every appearance of mind is produced without any mind at all? Sceptics are the last men in all this wide world to pretend to reason. They doubt against infinite odds; they believe without evidence, against evidence, against demonstration—and then talk of reason!

But now comes the sceptic with his all-potent, all magic sophism, "We cannot stretch analogy from earth to heaven;" and lo! reason, logic, demonstration, and the whole metaphysical mass of arguments strung together with so much labour, are instantly swept away like a very cobweb! But what, after all, is the meaning of this mighty oracle? How does it apply to the case in hand? "*We cannot stretch analogy from earth to heaven.*" Who wishes thus to stretch it? We ask no one to "predicate regarding unperceived things;" we call his attention to things on earth, to the works of nature every where surrounding him, and ask him if the appearances of mind indicated by these, do not furnish reasons for believing, that mind is therein concerned. In this, we do no more than does the sceptic himself, in reasoning on the appearances of mind in artificial things. The cause of *those* appearances, (the human mind,) is equally unperceived in his case, as is ours in ours. Or if we consider his *unintelligent* cause of the operations of nature, (his blind power,) we see not wherein he has the least advantage in this respect. He can see his power no more than we can see our intelligence. He can see appearances of power; we, appearances of intelligence. He does not locate his power in the heavens, but makes it all-per-

vading; we do the same in the case of our intelligent ~~causes~~. We ask not that any one should ascend to heaven in quest of God, "seeing he is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, move, and have our being, as certain also of *your own poets* have said." And all the parade and display of tropes and figures on this point in the last letter of my opponent, though a very pretty specimen of style, was nothing more. We do no more stretch analogy from earth to heaven, than does the sceptic. The only difference between us is, that he believes the appearances of intelligence in nature to be produced by an unintelligent cause; whereas, we believe those appearances to be produced by an intelligent one. And which belief, I would ask, is the more rational? 'Tis vain to think of evading the force of this—demonstration I would term it—by talking of microscopic specks in watches, and of human specks in the watch universal. We see more than a *mere something*; we see a something exhibiting appearances of design; and design is in its nature the same, whether in God or man. We *have* then a right to conclude, nay, by the rules of reason we *ought* to conclude, that there *is* design wherever there are appearances thereof. No more absurd would it be, to "suspend judgment" in relation to design, in artificial than in natural things. Appearance of design, and this alone, is manifest in both cases. We can indeed oftentimes see the *agent* by which artificial appearances of design are produced, but never do we see the cause, which is the design itself. And we too can see many of the agents which produce similar appearances in natural things. We see, for instance, the earth, the rain, and the sun, combining in the production of food. "So far," then, "we can unriddle all *this*," as well as the *other*, "and so far we" *know*, not "believe." And when God, not "*a Job*," asks us who meted the earth, and laid its corner stone, let us not absurdly doubt that any one did these things; but let us thereby, in view of our own insignificance, be rendered so *truly* "modest" and mindful of "common sense," as not to suppose ourselves, ("human specks" as we are, and seeing only "*a something*,") to be the greatest beings in the universe, and so wise withal as to decide that *infinite wisdom*, goodness, and power, could make a better world of this. Just as ridiculous is such a decision on our part, as would be a similar decision on that of the "microscopic speck" perched on the tooth of the watch-wheel, in relation to the *watch* and its maker. Why, sir, such decision is any thing but "diffidence;" any thing but "asserting *less*" than I do; any thing but "letting the great watch and its maker alone." A fine conclusion, indeed, for a being who has such a mere "glimmer" of knowledge as to be able to see *human* affairs but obscurely, and to "blunder every day and hour in his estimate of human motives, and his solution of earthly problems!" Is this neither asserting nor denying a God? Is this the "modest" pretence of "knowing nothing about it?" Is this keeping on the pivot between theism and

atheism, deciding in relation to neither? No! 'Tis denial the most positive. 'Tis atheism the most rank. 'Tis assumption of knowledge omniscient. 'Tis more. 'Tis not only *disbelieving* in a God, but pretending to *know* there is none. For, mark the assertion: "Omnipotent *and* benevolent he cannot be. Omnipotence *could*, and benevolence *would*, have prevented evil." That is to say, there is not an omnipotent *and* a benevolent being at the helm of the universe, and therefore no God; for a being destitute of these qualities is not an infinite being, and consequently not a God. Nor would any in this enlightened age for a moment think of adopting a medium course, between an infinite God, and no God at all. I say then, that the assertion under consideration amounts to the most full and absolute denial of a God which language can frame. And far more rational *is* such a denial, than for one to be for ever vacillating on the pivot, absurdly supposing, that, in a case like that of the universe, where the difference is so immense in reality, as that wisdom the most consummate, or no wisdom at all, is concerned, there are equal reasons for believing either way; or else thoughtlessly doubting both, and declining to reason on the subject, when the one side of the question or the other *must* be true. I say, that of all irrationalities, this one of the *pivot* is the greatest; and I am therefore highly gratified to see my opponent beginning to abandon it, and to make use of his *reasoning* faculties; for, if men will *reason*, there is some prospect of dislodging them from their untenable positions; otherwise, their case is indeed hopeless.

Yet not so very sceptical is friend Owen, after all; for, no sooner does he begin to reason, than he admits a God! though, to be sure, a finite one. Behold, reader, and *see* if he does not admit such a God. Here are his own words. "Do you insist that I should weigh in the scales of my *human reason*, such as they are, the probabilities of the universe, and the mysteries of its government? Be it so then.—I *do* examine, I test, I judge. You may argue that there is analogy enough" [between the works of nature and those of art, to prove a natural designer] "Excuse me. To me there is not enough—for any thing more than *supposition*." [And what is this but *supposing* there is a God?] "You appear to perceive the similarity *strongly*. I do not so perceive it." [He perceives it *weakly* of course, and therefore *perceives* it, to say the least.] "This is my conception, when I picture forth the deity at all:" [that is, when he thinks, and *reasons* on the subject:] "that he is benevolent, and of limited power.—Plato thought, that matter was of a refractory and evil nature, and that God did as well with it as he could. Plato's hypothesis is tenable, for he abandons the attribute of omnipotence." [Tenable positions must be admitted, and therefore my opponent, according to his own concession, must admit Plato's finite God.] "I can imagine Plato's deity; yours I cannot." [Why this distinction, unless there is reason *it*

imagining Plato's deity?] "I can suppose a God of limited powers, doing as well as he could, and producing the mixed happiness and misery we see; but I cannot even *suppose* a benevolent deity *able* to produce perfection, and producing only such a world as this." [Why so, unless there is *reason* to suppose the former, and not the latter? But if there *is* reason to suppose this, will not my opponent, a professed *disciple* of reason, *continue* to suppose so, instead of flying back to the pivot, and supposing nothing? Why *will* the man so disregard *reason*?]

The result of the foregoing analysis is, that, when Mr. Owen will not *reason* on the subject, he "knows nothing about it," and believes no way; but when he *will* reason, he admits a limited God. Here then is something definite at last. We will see, by and by, whether it cannot be shown, that there is not only a God, but that he is infinite.

On the subject of the existence of evil, we have no dispute. Let those defend optimism who hold it: suffice it for me to defend what I hold myself. I admit the existence of evil, and likewise that evil is not good. I admit, that, if all the positive good which does actually exist, were to exist without the evil, the universe would be a better one than it is. But to be qualified to say whether this could be the state of things or not, it must be obvious that we must be omniscient. In saying that God is omnipotent, I mean just what common sense would understand me to mean; which is not that he can do what would involve contradictions, like causing a thing to be and not to be at the same time; nor that he can do any thing which in the nature of things is impossible, like moving matter by persuasion, or mind by physical force; but I mean simply, that he can with his physical power do any thing to which physical power is applicable. But it does not hence follow, that he can wisely *exert* that power to its utmost in all cases. He *could* annihilate us all; but he does not see fit to do it. In every case, the exertion of his power is regulated by his infinite wisdom. He does not, like us, look at things in the abstract, deciding this thing, that, and the other, to be inadmissible, merely because, *in themselves considered*, they would be so; but he looks through all things, and beholds their relation to, and their bearing upon, one another, and decides what is for the best ON THE WHOLE. Such views of things is it necessary to take, in order to the wise management of a universe. Such views we cannot take. Hence, nothing is more evident, than that we are utterly incompetent to pronounce any part of a universe managed by a being *able* to take those views, an evidence of a lack of wisdom, goodness, or power. Nay, it is to be supposed, that, if produced by infinite wisdom, it *would* in some respects appear defective to us finite beings, who see so small a part of the vast whole. To the child, certain acts of the parent appear mysterious, and even absurd; but having other evidence that the parent is wiser than itself, it submits its own *wisdom* to the superior wisdom of the parent, and

"What it can't unriddle, learns to trust."

How much more should we, mere nothings compared with infinity, confide in his superior wisdom! Enough is there in nature, in which wisdom, goodness, and power *are* manifest, to teach us that there *is* a wise, a good, and a powerful being, far superior to ourselves. Whence it becomes us like children to conclude, that though *we* cannot now see the propriety of all his ways, yet that, were we as wise as he, we *could* see this. In the language of Socrates, heretofore quoted, we should say, "What I understand I admire, and am fully convinced to be every way worthy of its author; and therefore I conclude what I understand not to be equally excellent, and that it would appear so, if I understood all its concerns." Thus, this very appearance of defect in the universe, so far from being an objection to the infinity of the divine attributes, is an evidence in its favour.

In my next, I intend to treat more largely on this subject, and also to present such additional evidences of the divine existence, as may be derived from various other sources.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

TO ORIGEN BACHELER.

LETTER V.

March 25, 1831.

The stories that are usually told about sceptics and philosophers "renouncing scepticism" and dying repentant, are entitled to about as much credit (I desire to say it without offence) as Dr. Cotton Mather's Salem Witchcraft.

As to your difficulty about my definition of attraction: if we suppose a *tendency to approach* immediately preceding the motion of two attracted bodies, and if we call that tendency attraction, we may say, attraction is *the cause* of motion. But it is not the less true, that we know nothing about attraction except *as exhibited in motion*; or, in other words, except as a *uniform sequence* (or as a *tendency to a uniform sequence*) of motion.

Your argument regarding design, though diffusely illustrated, lies in a nutshell. Here is the whole of it: First. "Adaptation in matter is the *only* proof of mind in man. Second. *Because* human adaptation proceeds from mind, *all* that resembles human adaptation must. Third. *Therefore*, what appears adapted and what man has not adapted, an intelligent God has." Let us examine these propositions in order.

First. No: it is not the only proof. The first great proof of *mind to every man, woman, or child*, is his or her *sensation*. We

feel ourselves to be intelligent. We *feel* that we can and do adapt, contrive, design. We see our own designs. We see the designs of other beings like ourselves. Reasoning analogically, we suppose in them similar feelings, similar *mind* to our own. You may "defy me" (in Pyrrhonian fashion) "to prove the existence of intelligence" in man. In one sense I cannot *prove* it, except *to* myself and *in* myself. In the same sense, I cannot *prove* that matter exists at all. Though I see it, hear it, feel it, yet that may be *said* to prove only the existence of *my sensations*. But all this is quibbling—is nonsense. When I see and hear a watch, I *know** (whatever Pyrrho may say,) that it exists. When I see and hear a watch-maker filing and adjusting the watch-wheels, I *know* (whatever Origen Bachelor may say,) that he has intelligence, and is exerting it. Philology may quibble at the plain expression, "I see him design," but common sense will not. To me, who am a man, (and consequently myself a designer,) this seeing *is* proof—most satisfactory proof, too!—of mind, even though the watch-maker's brain has an opaque skull over it.

Follow out, then, the *whole* proof of the existence of human intelligence, thus: We feel intelligence within us. This is proof *of our own minds*. We exert it. We design. We see our designs. We see other similar phenomena. But observe! this is not all. *We see other beings, with limbs, heads, bodies, resembling ours, executing these similar phenomena.* We then become convinced, (so forcible is the analogy,) that in executing these designs, others feel as we do; in other words, that they, as well as ourselves, are what we call intelligent. This (and nothing else or less than this,) is the proof to us of mind *in others*.

Second. In what men call *natural* design, part of the *analogy* holds and part does not. We see phenomena something like our designs, *and there the analogy ceases*. We see no being, either like us or not like us, causing the phenomena, and in whom we might suppose *feelings like ours*; in other words, *mind or intelligence*. The shop of the great watch-maker we cannot approach.

You may tell us, if you will, that it would do no good if we could approach it. You may say, that could we "see a great being incarnate applying literal hands to the wheels of the universe," this would be no additional proof of the existence of a great designer. Nobody will believe you. You will not—pardon my plain dealing—believe yourself. You know—every one knows and feels—what an electrical effect such a bodily revelation would produce—how weak faith would be changed to sight, vague belief to certainty, drooping hope to assurance. And all this shall be no additional proof! Verily, such an argument needs not refutation, any more than would an assertion that we can see as clearly by starlight as at noonday.

* That is, if *know* be a verb fit for man to use at all.

Thus, *the last, great, overwhelming proof that assures us of human intelligence is totally deficient in the case of deity.* There is no infinite being in our image, or not in our image, of whom we can take cognizance. His work (or what men presume to call so,) is indeed before us; his workshop (your simile of the factory to the contrary notwithstanding,) is shut up—is unapproachable.

Now, you may argue, that there is analogy enough without approaching it. Excuse me. To *me* there is not enough—for any thing more than mere idle supposition. To you there may be. You appear to perceive the similarity strongly. Very well. I do not so perceive it. The clenching link, for me, is wanting—the observation of a designer. At the bottom of natural phenomena there may be a something that shall bear resemblance to man's mind, and might therefore be called *intelligence*; or, as the ancient stoics phrased it, *anima mundi*;* and yet, but a vague and faint resemblance after all! The mind of man always exists in connection with matter; the mind of the universe is to be supposed unconnected with it. The mind of man is finite and fallible; the mind of the universe is to be supposed infinite and infallible. The mind of man is born, strengthens in youth, and sinks to second childishness in old age; the mind of the universe is to be supposed unborn, unchanging, undecaying. Yet the existence of the mind of man is to prove the existence of a mind of the universe! The analogy between the two is to *satisfy* us that natural effects have a similar (yet a most dissimilar!) cause to artificial ones!

It does not satisfy me. I must have far more of presumptive evidence than this, before I venture to make assertions, positive or negative, regarding a mind of the universe.

Third. Therefore, when I perceive apparent adaptation, and know that the mind of man has not been concerned therein, I abstain from all assertions that an immaterial God has. I assume the modest—ay! the *modest*, consistent, common-sense station of the *pivot*: that is, I pretend to no knowledge which I have not. In default of evidence to warrant assertion, I *suspend judgment*.

You may call this rational diffidence by the name of presumption, if you please; and it will not be the first time that a virtue has been christened a vice, or a man asked how he *dared* to doubt what others saw fit to believe.

Your ingenious and aptly illustrated argument, numbered twelve, is superfluous. I have already admitted (who that is not blind can deny?) that there exists throughout nature, “a fitness, a convenient or harmonious concatenation of phenomena, which, if apparent to us in the works of man, would appear to us a pre-arrangement to effect an intention.”† I have myself suggested the most striking illustration that occurred to me, the

* Soul of the world.

† In my fourth letter.

mechanism of the human frame.* Your *prémises*, then, were fully, unreservedly admitted by me. I demurred to your *conclusions*, and have distinctly given my reasons for so demurring.

We would do well, however, when we are tempted to push such illustrations as these into unqualified optimism, and indiscriminately to wonder at every thing around us as a marvel of goodness and wisdom—we would do well, I say, when seduced into such blind admiration, to take heed lest we imitate the sagacity of the clerical commentator, who, with the utmost gravity, “praises divine goodness for always making the largest rivers flow by the most populous towns!”

Let those who advocate the doctrine of *chance* reply to your arithmetical argument. I am not among the number.

I wish you would have the goodness to make up your mind, once for all, whether we human specks *are* to reason touching the government of the universe or not. Are we, or are we not, to predicate regarding omnipotence—to stretch analogy from earth to heaven? Are we to speak of divine intentions as of human intentions, of divine justice and benevolence and wisdom and mercy and love, as of these qualities in man? If we are, let us use our reason freely. If we are not; if justice on earth be not justice in heaven; if man's mercy and goodness resemble not God's; if we may not judge, in heaven as on earth, powers by results, intentions by deeds, and virtues by their fruits; then, in common sense's name, let us close our books of theology at once, and sum up our spiritual creed in three short words: “We know not.”

This is my creed, and you are dissatisfied. You say: “Examine, test, judge.” Very well. I do examine, I test, I judge; and I remind you before I begin, (what you seem greatly inclined to forget,) that all my sins of presumption lie at your door.

At your request, then, I “speak as a man,” as St. Paul would say. I ask my human reason (not having any other,) whether an all-powerful and all-benevolent being *can* produce evil, misery, suffering. My human reason says: “You had better ask me some more practical questions.”—“No, no,” I reply, “Origen Bachelier wants an answer.”—“He insists upon it?”—“Yes.”—“The answer is short. *Omnipotence could, benevolence would have prevented evil.*”—As soon as, in reply to your urgent inquiries, I transmit to you this, my reason's answer, you turn round upon me: “Ah! so you *presume* to decide in this matter! Is it not obvious, that, to be able to decide, we must be omniscient?”

But (with permission,) you knew very well, I presume, before you questioned me, that my reason was *not* omniscient. And if nothing *but* omniscience may argue such points, it was very useless, methinks, to bring them on the carpet. And then,

* In my third letter.

too, if the negative be presumptuous, what shall we say of the positive? Origen Bachelier's reason assures him, that *omnipotence could not make a world without evil*. Where did he learn this? Is he omniscient?

For consistency's sake, I pray you, let us do one thing or another. Let us not first urge reason to speak, and then refuse her a hearing; first tell her she *must* decide, and then cry out about her arrogantly presuming on a decision. Neither let those who would not have us become critics of deity, set themselves up as his apologists.

We know, as well as we know our own existence, that if a man could do whatever he willed, and if that man were purely, unmixedly benevolent, he would not—*could* not, produce to any sentient thing one moment of suffering. To suppose him to produce one such moment, is to suppose him to will it. To suppose him to will it, is to suppose him malevolent. There is *no* escape, if words have any meaning at all. The same argument applies *strictly, in all its force*, to God, *if reason is to have any thing whatever to say about a God*. A being is *not* all-powerful, who wishes to prevent misery and cannot: a being is *not* benevolent, who can prevent evil and will not. To deny this, is to make the words *all-powerful* and *benevolent* mere empty sounds; or else, to declare, that reason has nothing to do with theology.

You disclaim optimism. You have only one alternative, then; and that is, to deny either that God is all-powerful or that he is benevolent. If the production of evil be not (as the optimist says it is) *for the best*, then your God does that which is not for the best. Could he help it or could he not? If he could and would not, what becomes of his benevolence? If he would and could not, what of his power?

No, sir. The optimist's ground, weak and untenable as it is, is far, far stronger than yours. Once admit, that "without evil the universe would be a better one than it now is;" and there is no human escape from the conclusion, that a creator of the universe was deficient either in the will or the power to make it better.

How do you attempt to get out of this dilemma? By telling us, that omnipotence "cannot do any thing that would involve contradictions, such as causing a thing to be and not to be at the same time." Well, sir, what of that? There is no question here about a world happy and miserable at once. What contradiction is there involved in the simple supposition of a happy universe? What incongruity, in imagining the mere absence of evil? None, sir, whatever. If our reason may speak at all, she tells us this. Just knowledge, and its consequent, happiness, are good, desirable, possible. Just knowledge and happiness do not exist but to a limited, imperfect extent. Ask you the proof? Seek it within ourselves! Do we not feel—the dullest among us—that we are not, in feelings, in know-

ledge, or in situation, what we ought to be, or what we might have been? Do we not feel—the best and wisest among us—that there are springs of virtue within us that have seldom been touched? generous aspirings that have scarcely been called into action? capabilities of improvement that have hardly been awakened? capabilities of enjoyment that have been checked, or, it may be, turned to fountains of bitterness? And do we not *know* that this is not for the best? Do we not feel, more strongly than words can express it, how far, far short this suffering world falls of the paradise of beauty and happiness which it might—which it *should* be? ay! which, some day or other in the progress of improvement, it *will* be, even to mortal, fallible, imperfect man? And if we, frail and short-sighted! can so vividly realize by anticipation all this, what might not omniscience have conceived, and omnipotence have effected! What a banquet of brilliancy and bliss might not infinite goodness have spread for us here! And how conclusive, how overpowering, how utterly irresistible the proof, that viands surcharged with the poison of ignorance, and goblets drugged to the brim with bitterness, were never prepared for us by an all-good and all-powerful father!

Plato thought that God and matter were co-eternal; that matter was of a refractory and evil nature, and that God was obliged to take it as he found it, and do as well as he could with such material. Now, sir, Plato's hypothesis is tenable, for he abandons the attribute of omnipotence; yours is untenable, for you insist on retaining it.

The Unitarian is an Atheist in Calvin's God, the Universalist in the Unitarian's, the Mussulman in both; and I, sir, am an Atheist in yours. I can *imagine* Plato's deity; yours I cannot. I can suppose a God of limited powers doing as well as he could, and producing the mixed happiness and misery we see: but I cannot even *suppose* a benevolent deity *able to produce perfection*, and producing only such a world as this. If a God be the creator of all things, and therefore of evil also, the *only* defence of his goodness is to say, he could not help it.

I would not have you believe (for it is not the case) that I am either cynically or captiously inclined. If I lament much, I hope more; if the world is imperfect, it is improving; if ignorance transforms and degrades it, ignorance is gradually disappearing; if I think meanly of man's condition, I think nobly of his capabilities; if there have been many prolific causes of human misery, they are, with few exceptions, rather incidental, and such as just knowledge can remove, than absolutely necessary and incurable. But if all human misery ceased for ever to-morrow, 'twould not be the less true, or the less lamentable, that it has existed for ages. Millions of years of bliss cannot blot out the reality of one moment of wretchedness. Misery has been and is, whatever may be hereafter; and *that it has been and that it is, supplies evidence sufficient, that there*

exists no power *both* able and willing to prevent its existence.

I will freely admit to you, that there is much of beauty and fitness, yes! and of happiness, even now in the world; but what I object to is the assertion that there is perfection there. The eye is indeed a nice machine, but how easily put out of order! The ear is aptly fitted to receive sounds, but how often afflicted with deafness! The sun warms, but it scorches also. The rain refreshes, but sometimes floods the country. The arrangements for parturition are curiously ingenious; but how tedious the process, and how dangerous and painful its termination! The infant's lungs are well adapted to the atmospheric air, but their first inspiration appears to be drawn with discomfort, and the first cry it utters seems a cry of suffering. It instinctively seeks its mother's breast, but the first milk she affords is often afforded with acute pain. That milk nourishes; but if the mother sicken, the suckling too is a sufferer. Our affections are prolific sources of enjoyment; but death turns pleasure to grief, and love to desolation.

Yet these and all similar imperfections in the economy of nature's arrangements are mere trifles not worth enumerating, compared to those to which man's errors and ignorance subject him; and if I advert to them now, it is not because I regard them as serious impediments to human happiness *after man has learned true wisdom*, but only because you insist upon my reading "PERFECTION!" stamped upon all things. Nor will I even deny, that it admits at least of an ingenious argument, whether each one of these *natural* sources of pain, might not, under favourable circumstances, bring to man, *as he happens to be constituted*, almost as much of good as of evil.

But if an omnipotent God brought into being this world—if in him we "live and move and have our being," he created not the earth only, but its inhabitants also. He formed man's character, with all its ignorance and its vices. He made it too weak to resist temptation, and placed temptation in its way: he decreed that it should be ignorant and unhappy until taught by experience, and he permitted it to acquire that experience only slowly and gradually. We may indeed remind ourselves, how beautiful and harmonious nature's arrangements would be, *if* that perverse creature, man, did not, by his folly, bring confusion out of order, and discord out of harmony. But we must ever bear in mind, that this same perverse creature, with his folly, is as much the creator's work, as any portion of the nature he so mars and abuses.

What avails it, then, that

All, *save* the spirit of man, is divine?

Is not man's the master spirit that extracts from Nature's garden poison or sweets? And shall we overlook its agency in *judging* the perfection of the world? Is not man's character

the one thing needful to man's happiness? and if his creator permit that character to become selfish, treacherous, designing, profligate, how vainly has he adapted all the rest of nature to furnish human happiness? What avails it that a deity give us sweet affections, if they be checked by coldness, or seared by ridicule? what, that he spread before us with a liberal hand all that may satisfy our wants and gratify our senses, if the very gift become an apple of discord, a cause of private contention and of public war, of pride and of slavishness, of envy and of contempt? To what purpose ingenuity, if it conduct to oppression? the arts, if they only create luxury? power and riches, if they but foster weariness and discontent? Is hope a blessing, if it lead to disappointment? or genius a good, if its possessor be wretched? What, too, are earth's loveliest scenes, if liberty and peace pervade them not? Of what value are light and beauty without, if within there be deformity and darkness? How shall it advantage us, that a thousand gifts and blessings are granted, if the last, best gift be wanting—just knowledge? and if the blessing of blessings be withheld—happiness-bringing virtue?

Yet so it is; and no theological sophistry can deny, that the same hand that gives the one withholds the other.

Needs it to repeat reason's inevitable conclusion, that an all-creating deity—the author of misery and vice—*must* be deficient either in goodness or in power?

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

LETTER VI.

New-York, April 2, 1831.

SIR,

In saying that some who renounce scepticism, declare that, previous to their renunciation, they *wished* to be sceptics, I had no allusion to the dying renunciations of infidels, but to cases of infidel conversion, such as are frequently occurring, like that of the editor of "*Priestcraft Exposed*," for example. I am far, however, from conceding, that the accounts of the dying renunciations of infidels are incorrect.

With regard to my opponent's explanation of attraction as being a *mode* of action, upon which I commented in my last, I perceive he has changed his position, and now explains it to be a *tendency* to action. This is no better than the other. It is making the effect the cause. There must be something to *induce*

this tendency. And this, not the tendency itself, is attraction. Water has a tendency to evaporate, and vapour to condense; but who would think of attributing their evaporation and condensation to this tendency?

I did intend to say no more on the subject of design; but the last letter of my opponent requires a few words on this point—and but a few.

Adaptation is the only *proof of mind*. Consciousness is not proof; it is knowledge. A man *knows* that he himself designs, as well as he knows that matter exists; and he does positively know both. He sees and feels matter, and therefore knows that that exists. But he does not see or feel the *mind of another*; and therefore the cases of mind and matter are not parallel. When we see a watch, we know that it exists; but when we see a watchmaker engaged in making a watch, we do not know, nor is it proved even to ourselves, that he is exercising intelligence, unless *appearance* of intelligence is proof thereof. For, although he produces appearances similar to those which we know to be the result of intelligence in ourselves, yet if similar appearances in nature can be produced by an unintelligent cause, why not in this instance? Why not one unintelligent cause produce appearances of intelligence, as well as another? And what matters it whether we see the cause or not? We know there *must* be a cause, and *seeing* it makes us *no more* than know it; it is only seeing that *cause*, and not its *mind*. For aught we know, the being we behold “with hands, head, and body like ours,” may be an idiot, unless appearance of intelligence is an unfailing proof thereof. This position, I am confident, can never, never be shaken.

I do not admit that we cannot approach the workshop of the deity. Creation is that workshop, in which his operations are continually going on, though he is himself invisible. And *were* he visible, this would be no proof of his intelligence; for the proof of intelligence consists, not in the visibility of a being, but in the appearance of intelligence which he manifests; which appearance is proof, whether the being be visible or not. Who thinks of doubting design in artificial works, though the designer be not visible?

I object to the assertion, that the mind of man always exists in connection with matter. I believe it exists separate from matter after death.

It will be seen, that my opponent has “*fully and unreservedly*” admitted my premise, that, were the appearances of design which are now exhibited in the works of nature, to be exhibited in the works of art, they would be evidence to us of design. Why then are they not evidence of design now? Not because the cause is invisible; for we very often see artificial works without seeing their cause, and yet think that design was concerned in their construction. Why then not believe in design in *natural* things, without seeing their cause? Is the

mark of a saw or a hammer, as exhibited in artificial to turn the scale?—a mark too which is altogether *undesignated*? Shall that which is occasioned by no design at all, design in the one case, while all possible semblance of does not prove it in the other? But suppose we cannot *ascertain* that there is a natural designer; (though this I do not, so far as regards *moral* certainty;) still I would ask, is it not more *reasonable* to *believe* now that there is every semblance of design, than to disbelieve in one, or even than to suspend judgment on the subject. And it will be recollected, that the very question under discussion is, whether there is to *believe* in a God. And why suspend judgment in this case? The appearances are not of a *doubtful* character, seemingly like design, and partly not. This ought to be their effect, in order to a suspension of judgment. But no: it is said, that they have all the appearance of design which any man can have. To suspend judgment in such a case, is to do violence, by suspending it against all probability. It is *reasonable* to *believe probabilities*; *unreasonable* not to believe them.

The sophism of my opponent respecting the flowing of rivers through populous towns, can hardly take with the most superficial. A man may adapt his works to the state of things around him, and does not argue, that the adaptation of his *own frame* to the state of things, (in which adaptation he has no concern,) is a proof of a natural designer. But even in the case of the localities and towns near rivers, *design* is apparent, though not in the design. Equally apparent is design in natural adaptation. My opponent must not expect to escape the mathematical argument presented in my last, by shouldering it upon the

If the adaptation and adjustment which obtain throughout the universe, cannot happen without an intelligent cause, I am bound positively to *admit* such a cause. His *forbearance* in not making this *admission*, is saying that there is no necessity, of admitting a God for all these things, and, consequently, that they can all happen without one. Let him then appear so—and therefore dispose of my mathematical argument as he can.

In my last, I conceded to the sceptic, for the sake of arguing to his advantage of momentum, to enable him to make his argument on chance arrangements, and thereby to avail himself of the whole benefit of his scheme, which includes motion. I will now dispute his right even to this, and put him on his defence of the same. I deny that matter has in itself a principle of motion. I maintain that it can only act when impelled. All mere matter is alike in this respect; and even the celestial bodies of heaven have no more a principle of action in the matter of which they are composed, than have the very rocks. Heavenly bodies move, but it is because they are made to move by the attraction of other bodies. If the planets wheeled

their courses round the sun, it is because they are made thus to do by the influence of that body upon them; which body is as void of an inherent principle of motion as are those other bodies, and must obviously lie motionless itself, were there not a being distinct from itself to cause it to move. The case may be illustrated by a machine. One wheel moves by being made by another to move, and that by another, and so on to the main spring, which is itself as void of a self-moving principle as any part of the machine whatever, and would remain motionless, were it not for the interposition of man—a being containing such a principle. Were motion an inherent property of matter, so far would it be from an impossibility to construct a machine of perpetual motion, that there could not be one constructed without it. "How is it possible," asks Plato, speaking of the earth, "for so prodigious a mass to be carried round for so long a time by any natural cause? For this reason, I assert God to be the cause, and that it is impossible it should be otherwise." "Every thing that is moved," says Aristotle, "must of necessity be moved by some other thing; and that thing must be moved, either by another or not by another thing. If it be moved by that which is moved by another, we must of necessity come to some prime mover that is not moved by another. For it is impossible that what moves, and is moved by another, shall proceed *ad infinitum*."

Let us now resume the subject of the existence of evil.

It will be recollected, that I have expressly disclaimed optimism, and that I have admitted the existence of real evil—evil which is positively not a good. I believe indeed, as the Bible asserts, that every thing shall operate for the good of good men, but not for that of bad men. I do *not* believe, that theft will work for the good of the thief, drunkenness for the good of the drunkard, murder for the good of the murderer. *This* would *indeed* be derogatory, both to the wisdom and the holiness of God, making him the nullifier of his own laws, and the minister of sin. And it is a striking mark of his wisdom, and of his regard to holiness, that he *has* connected misery with sin, and that optimism is *not* true; so that the very objection, that misery of this kind exists, is an argument in our favour. I have likewise admitted, that, if all the positive good which does actually exist, could be in existence without the evil, the universe would be a better one than it now is; but I have *not* admitted, as I perceive is attributed to me, that the universe would be better without this evil, *unless* the present good could exist without it. And that this could or could not be the case, requires omniscience to decide. We can indeed decide in some cases, but not in all. There *are* cases in which we can be certain, that the existing good could not exist without its consequent evil. Had pain never existed, the good of exemption from pain could not have been fully realised. Had sin never existed, the holiness of God could not *have been* displayed, as it now is, in the manifestation of his dis-

approbation thereof, and his mercy could not have been displayed in its forgiveness. It needs not be said, that *omnipotence* could cause these effects by other means than these. Omnipotence himself, as I have already stated, cannot perform things impossible in their nature. He cannot accomplish contradictions. He cannot produce effects, without the application of adequate causes. He cannot forgive sin, unless sin exists to be forgiven. And as to his *moral* ability, he cannot do any thing wrong, any thing unwise. Were he to do thus, he would not be a good or a wise being; and therefore, as a good and a wise being, he cannot do a wrong or an unwise deed. Nor does this derogate from his omnipotence. The term omnipotence involves the idea of no such power in God. All that is meant by it is, that he has the physical power to do any thing to which physical power is applicable. How that power should be exercised *infinite* wisdom alone can decide: and therefore, *finite* wisdom should not presume to pronounce any of its exercises unwise. I would indeed have a man use reason; and therefore would I have him not thus presume.

That there is an *intelligent* cause at the helm of the universe, is as absurd to doubt, as to believe that appearance of intelligence can be produced by non-intelligence. Were there *no* appearance of intelligence, it would be reasonable to doubt the existence of intelligence; and now that there *is* appearance thereof, it is, by parity of reasoning, just as rational to conclude that there *is* intelligence. Indeed, it is admitted, that if we are to exercise *reason* on the subject, the conclusion will be, that there is an intelligent cause, though a finite one, unable to prevent the evil that exists. This point then is conceded: that there is *reason* to believe in the existence of an *intelligent God*. But this concession being made, it is then contended, that he cannot be infinite. "Omnipotent and benevolent," says my opponent, "he cannot be. Omnipotence *could*, and benevolence *would*, have prevented evil." Let us see how this is.

Genuine benevolence, so far from shrinking at the permission of evil, would absolutely cause it to be produced, if on the whole its existence were for the best. It would be a want of benevolence to decline so to do, as, for example, in the case of the parent who, out of false tenderness, forbears to administer the necessary discipline to a child, or in that of rulers who forbear to enforce the necessary laws. That God is benevolently disposed, may be gathered from the innumerable and gratuitous tokens of his goodness every where displayed. Now, a being conferring gratuitous happiness, cannot be considered morally capable of inflicting unnecessary evil. Hence, the evil that does exist is not to be attributed to malevolence in the Deity. Nor is it attributable to want of power. Most assuredly, the being, that with his thunders shakes the empyrean, and heaves up old ocean with the blast of his nostrils, and rends from surface to centre the everlasting hills, can palsify the arm high poised with

the instrument of death, or crush the insect prepared to give the envenomed sting. How puerile then the idea, that God has not the *physical* power to prevent evil! And how impious the idea, that his forbearing to prevent it is to be attributed to a want of benevolence! The only rational conclusion which is left, then, is, that he does, in view of all things, see best *not* to prevent it. But this is by no means admitting, that he has made us "too weak to resist temptation."

Thus, without omniscience, do I by demonstration arrive at the result, not that the universe is as good as it could be if contradictions could exist, and if all the present good could exist without the evil; but that it is as good as it is possible for it to be; as good as a being infinitely powerful, good, and wise can make it; and better than it could be on any other system. Understand me. I do not say that the evil which exists is good; but I say, that it is better that that evil exist as a consequence of the existent good, than that the good itself do not exist; and therefore, that the existence of evil is *on the whole* for the best. This is the "*perfection*" which I insist on one's reading in the works of God—which in truth is perfection, wisdom, justice, benevolence, of the very highest order—ininitely higher than that of a system which should forego the good, for the sake of excluding the evil.

Before closing this letter, I will just bring into view, for consideration, the remaining evidences of the divine existence which I intend to have investigated during the present discussion.

First. The present appearance of the earth, which shows that it is not eternal, and that it must therefore have had a creator.

Second. The present amount of the population of the earth, which shows that the human race cannot have been eternally existent, and that *they* must therefore have had a creator.

Third. The present state of knowledge and improvement among mankind, which shows that they cannot have been eternally progressing.

Fourth. The concurrent voice of all history and tradition, which is decidedly against the idea of the world's eternity.

Fifth. The lack of any memorial whatever, so much as hinting at any thing of this nature.

Sixth. The common consent of mankind, that there is a God.

Seventh. The existence of rational beings, and even of irrational ones.

Eighth. Divine providence.

Ninth. Experience.

Tenth. Revelation.

Under each of the above heads I shall observe such brevity, that, though one would suppose a summer's work were here laid out, I shall be able to close my part of the discussion thereon, and likewise on the whole subject of the divine existence, in four letters more.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

TO ORIGEN BACHELER.

LETTER VI.

March 9, 1831.

I have not more faith in conversions from scepticism to orthodoxy, than I have in the death-bed renunciations of infidels. Silence in those who may once have spoken boldly, is eagerly construed into assent; but there may be many causes for silence. Orthodox influence may sometimes deprive a man of bread; and it is a hard thing to see a wife and children starve before one's eyes!

I perceive, from your objections to my definition of attraction, whence your great difficulty in comprehending my theological scepticism arises. You have never taxed your reason strictly to inquire what we know, or can know, *touching the relation of cause and effect*. You are far, very far from being singular in this; but the inquiry, however frequently neglected, is essential to correct reasoning regarding a creating cause.

We say "*fire produces heat*,"* or "*fire is the cause of heat*." What do we mean? In strictness nothing more than this: "*There are two phenomena, the existence of fire and the existence of heat. Of these two, the former UNIFORMLY AND IMMEDIATELY PRECEDES the latter.*" This *uniform precedence* of fire is all that entitles it to the name of a *cause*; and this *uniform sequence* of heat is all that entitles it to the name of an *effect*. When we say, *the connection between fire and heat is natural or necessary*, we only mean that *the sequence is uniform*. We have seen fire kindled a thousand times, and have felt heat immediately follow the kindling as often. Did we find heat as immediately and uniformly follow any other phenomenon, we should, in like manner, call that phenomenon (no matter what) *its cause*;† without knowing any thing more than that heat always succeeded it. For instance: if, whenever a tree first put forth its leaves in spring, heat followed their appearance, we should say, a budding tree is *the cause of heat*. Did heat follow no other phenomenon, we should say, a budding tree is the *sole cause of heat*. Then as now, we should not know *how* or *why* the cause produced heat, we should only know *that* it produced it; in other words, that it *uniformly preceded it*. And a budding tree would then seem to us just as natural and as necessary a cause of heat as a fire or the sun does now.

* I beg the reader to observe, that, throughout this illustration, I employ the word *fire* in a popular sense, simply to mean the phenomena usually exhibited in a grate or other fire-place—to wit, flame, smoke, &c. In scientific strictness, it were probably more correct to say that *heat causes fire* (or, in other words, *precedes combustion*;) than to say that *fire causes heat*.

† This is the case as regards *friction*. Because heat uniformly and immediately follows friction, we pronounce friction to be a cause of heat.

But science, you will say, steps in and *explains* the phenomenon of combustion. She tells us that combustion consists in a change of certain bodies from a solid to an aeriform state; that, in their aeriform state, their capacity for heat is much less than in their solid state; and that, *in consequence*, during the transition from one state to the other, caloric is evolved, or, in plainer terms, heat is given out—is *produced*. But what means all this? It is but *the recording of a sequence of phenomena*. The only explanation thus furnished consists in a *detailed statement of that sequence of phenomena*. The first phenomenon is the change of combustible matter from a solid to a gaseous form; the second (immediately and uniformly following the first) is the perceptible existence of heat. We are as far from the *how* or the *why* as ever. To say that the capacity of gas for caloric is less than that of a solid body, is not, in a strict sense, to *explain* any thing. When the change of form produced by combustion occurs, *heat follows*: this we know, and this is all we know. We cannot tell how or why gas has a less capacity for heat than a solid has; and if we even tender some explanation, that explanation merely consists of a statement of some other intermediate fact, regarding which the how and the why still remain to be answered. The very learned *in consequence* which I have italicised in the above explanation means nothing, unless we restrict its meaning according to its etymological derivation, (from *consequi*, to follow closely) and then it designates a sequence only.

In strictness, there is no *how* or *why*, in the great chain of causes and consequents, for man to get at. We observe sequences of motion or action, or, in other words, of phenomena. In proportion as we employ the light of science, do we distinguish many minute and hidden sequences—many intermediate links, which at first escaped us. We gradually discover which of these sequences are uniform. And that is all. We never get any farther—we have no farther to get—than to know *that* they are uniform sequences. A uniform sequence of two links we call (merely because it *is* uniform) *a cause and an effect*. Every link in the great chain is an effect, in reference to some certain phenomenon that precedes it; and also a cause, in reference to some certain phenomenon that succeeds it. When we distinguish a uniformly preceding phenomenon, we discover a cause; when we do not, we are ignorant of the cause; that is, the preceding link has escaped our observation. But whether we discover it or not, we know nothing regarding the how and wherefore of causation, except that a cause is a *preceding*, and an effect a *succeeding* phenomenon.*

When I distinguish the agency of man uniformly preceding artificial design, the simple circumstance that it does uniformly

* Our readers will find a view of the subject very similar to that here presented, in a treatise by the celebrated Thomas Brown of Edinburgh, on "Cause and Effect;" also in his "Moral Philosophy."

precede it constitutes man the cause. Could I distinguish the agency of a God in like manner always preceding what is called natural design, the case would be the same. But in the former case my senses distinguish the agent; in the latter, they do not. The phenomenon preceding artificial design I discover—it is man: the phenomenon preceding natural design I do not discover—you say it is God. You assert, then, that God's agency *uniformly precedes* all natural phenomena. What proof, nay, what even vague idea, can we possibly have of such precedence? I confess I have none.

We can, in the nature of things, have no *more* proof that man is a designer, than simply this: his agency *uniformly precedes* artificial design. No other proof can be had to substantiate the connection between *any* cause and its effect.

To distinguish such uniform precedence in the case of God, would be full proof of his agency; but this we cannot distinguish, and therefore have not full proof. The proof *from analogy* is all we have; and the cases, as I told you, are too dissimilar for the analogical argument to convince my reason.

Let us not waste our time in mere verbal disputes. You deny that "motion is an *inherent* quality of matter," or that matter "*has in it* a principle of motion." You mean, I suppose, that matter is inert, and that all the causes of motion, attraction, affinity, and so on, are powers or influences existing separate from, and independently of, matter. Here (let me a second time remind you) you are approaching the theology of science. A body heavier than the atmosphere, if unsupported, falls, or moves towards the earth: two light bodies, placed very near to each other in calm water, approach: if sulphuric acid be added to carbonate of soda, the acid moves towards, and combines with, the soda; and the carbonic acid of the carbonate, no longer possessing a quality or inclination (which you will) that induced it to remain in contact with the soda, escapes in the form of gas. These are three ascertained facts. We attribute the first to *gravitation*, the second to *cohesion*, the third to *affinity*. As qualities of matter, these words have some meaning; as separate from matter, they are mere abstractions. We make them substantives; we ought, in *strictness*, to use them as adjectives only—to say, *an attracted body*, *a cohering body*, and so on. We might as well try to separate the agility of the greyhound from the greyhound, or the beauty of the antelope from the antelope, as to conceive attraction distinct from the thing attracted, or cohesion independent of the bodies cohering.

Under certain circumstances, bodies do move. This we know, and this—let us wrangle ever so long—is *all we know*. We have seen bodies moving; but as to seeing or knowing or in any way distinguishing MOTION, as a separately existing thing, it is a perfect abuse of language to talk of it. If we suppose it such, the supposition is idle and gratuitous.

Formerly you called me an atheist, because I told you that

I cannot even imagine your God; now you insist upon it that I am a deist, because I tell you I *can* imagine Plato's. The conclusions are equally illogical. Direct inconsistencies may safely be pronounced impossible: unknown probabilities can only be spoken of as doubtful. So to speak of them is no expression of belief.

Your argument regarding the existence of evil is indeed a strange one! "We enjoy," you tell us, "the utmost possible good and happiness that omnipotent benevolence can bestow." What a conception of omnipotence! How? a deity *cannot* improve this suffering world!—*cannot* (without doing more harm than good,) prevent debasing slavery, insolent tyranny, public oppression, private feuds, brutal vices, savage ignorance, wars, burnings, inquisitions, auto-da-fes—passions and scenes that render earth a Pandemonium,—and yet he is OMNIPOTENT! What! a deity *cannot* produce the scanty, checkered, fleeting happiness that men enjoy, except through the instrumentality of such a load of plagues and curses as this,—and yet he is ALL-powerful! Why, sir, 'tis a perfect mockery of language—a laughing at reason—an assassination of common sense! A deity *cannot* do what even the insect man himself is daily effecting,—cannot discard the evil and retain the good—yet man is a worm, and his God is OMNIPOTENT! Weak! weak and miserable indeed were *such* omnipotence! Frail and mortal as I am, even I would cast from me the offer of such an attribute as an empty and a worthless thing! Glorious indeed and blissful would it be, to BE omnipotent! to say to the raging ocean of human vices and miseries, "Peace! be still!" and to see the command followed by a great and a happy calm! Glorious and blissful would it be, to possess the power of speaking virtue into being—of saying, "Let there be happiness!" and witnessing its instant creation. But to have the shadow without the substance—to be *called* omnipotent, yet to know that I could not prevent one single sigh of affliction or groan of torture that ascended to my eternal throne, without creating more misery still—to see and feel all this, and then to be comforted with empty praises and glorifications of my almighty power—or, perchance, with the paltry reflection that I had thus obtained the pleasure of forgiving sin, and the selfish gratification of displaying my holiness, by officiously condemning what I had been compelled to permit—thus to live, I say, through an eternity, disappointed in my benevolence, and impotent in my omnipotence, were an existence for which I would scorn to barter even the few short years of human life I hope to enjoy!

But this monstrous inconsistency—this impotent omnipotence—*must* be, I am told. Why must it?—"The deity is good because he permits much gratuitous good."—Suppose he is.—"He is also omnipotent."—Why?—"Because 'he heaves up old ocean with the blast of his nostrils, and rends from surface to centre the everlasting hills!'" Assuredly, sir, Plato has the

better of you here, notwithstanding the sublimity of your simile. He says that matter is evil and refractory, and that God's power is limited. He will admit that that power is sufficient to heave up old ocean and rend the hills; but he will deny that it is sufficient to dry up the ocean of misery, and to level the mountains of vice. And if you ask for his proof, it is ready: "God *does* the one," he will say, "and does *not* do the other."

And must all this overwhelming mass of matter-of-fact evidence—this clear daylight of proof—be overturned by a comparison between an omnipotent God and a human parent? Are we to be told, that because it would be a want of benevolence in an earthly father to spare the rod, it would be the same in a heavenly father to avert misery? The *rod* system is now getting out of fashion; but suppose it were not. Is it not precisely because the parent finds (or thinks he finds,) the nature of his child evil and refractory, and because (like Plato's God,) he must get along with this evil and refractory nature as well as he can, that he resorts to beating? If he could mould the nature, and create the motive, and inspire the will, would he not do so, and dispense with the birch? If he would not, he merits not the name of a father!

And *must* a deity (to follow up the simile,) *beat* us into virtue and happiness? An enlightened instructor, (without omniscience, without omnipotence, who cannot dive into the human heart, or command the human will, or create the deciding motive,) even such a short-sighted instructor CAN dispense with the rod, now-a-days; and an all-seeing, omnipotent being, the searcher of hearts, the sole creator of the will, the God in whom we live and move and have our being—CANNOT! Finite man is a sage, and infinite omnipotence a bungler! Words were thrown away in the refutation of such a conception.

Your defence, then, of an omnipotent creator of this world falls to the ground—and the space allotted to me is exhausted.

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

LETTER VII.

New-York, April 16, 1831.

SIR,

It is but a sorry specimen of liberality, virtually to charge recanting infidels with self-interested hypocrisy in making their recantations. This looks to me quite as illiberal and personal

as any thing of which sceptics complain, as manifested toward themselves on the part of Christians.

I cannot assent to the proposition that mere precedence and sequence are cause and effect. For instance, our letters in this discussion uniformly precede and follow one another; whereas, we ourselves are the cause of our own letters, and these letters are our own effects; but the letters are not the cause or effect of one another. Nor do *we merely* precede our letters. Nay, our *dry pens* might move over our paper till we were grey, and not a sign of an idea should we render visible. And it is pretty evident, that if heat followed "the budding of a tree," that budding would be the cause of it: for it would not follow *uncaused*. But, for argument's sake, suppose I admit, that this idea of cause and effect is correct, and that we know nothing more in relation to them, than that the one precedes and the other follows. What bearing has this on the subject of the discussion? Its bearing, if any it has, goes to show that we cannot prove a cause at all, whether visible or invisible—a sentiment which may well rank with the other whims of philosophy-run-mad, such as the denial of matter, and motion, &c., &c., &c., and which it is not worth one's while to spend time in confuting, seeing the common sense of mankind will not fail to dispose of all such nonsense as it deserves. But what has this to do with invisible attraction, or an invisible God? And what if we do see the *precedence* or *cause* in the case of human effects, and do not see it in that of natural effects? As effects are not produced without a *precedence*, we know just as well that there is a *precedence* for natural effects as if we did see it. Nor do we any more see attraction, or, in other words, the instrumental *precedence* of natural motion, than we see God himself. And it would be just as rational to argue, that motion has therefore no *precedence*, as for this reason to argue that there is no God—just as rational to ask, What proof can we have of the unseen agency of any *precedence* or *cause* in nature whatever? as to ask thus in relation to the agency of God. Effects prove a cause, and intelligent effects prove an intelligent cause, to every rational mind; and it matters not the least whether those causes be visible or invisible.

I do not consider our difference on motion a mere verbal one, by any means. To say that motion merely takes place, and that this is all we know about it, is an outrage on a self-evident fact, and totally unworthy of a really 'free inquirer.' I *know* that I *cause* my pen to *move* now while penning this, by the application of *physical power*. I know that it would not move without being *made* to move by the application of such power. It contains not this power within itself. The same holds of all mere matter; and whether *attracted*, or *floats*, or *blown about*, it is thus moved by something else, as much as my pen is. Motion itself is not a *property* of any thing, but mobility, or the power of *giving* motion, is so. As to "the beauty of the antelope,"

that is entirely another subject. "The agility of the greyhound" is caused by the physical power within himself. But mere matter has not this inherent power. Hence matter cannot move itself. Therefore, although we may attribute the motion of the planets to the influence of the sun, the motion of the sun must be attributed to God.

That it has been plainly admitted that *reason* teaches a God, needs no additional argument to show. The reader is merely referred to the quotations and comments on this point contained in my last. Let us now consider the subject of the existence of evil.

God is good. The vast amount of animal life with which all nature teems, and which on the whole is far more happy than miserable; the attention which suffering excites, showing that it is not the common state of things; the comparatively small amount of suffering which would exist, with proper care and conduct on our part; the forbearance on the part of God to inflict the full desert of sin in cases of penitence, as every penitent is ready to testify; his long forbearance with the wicked, yea, more than forbearance, bestowing upon them many of the comforts of life, notwithstanding their ingratitude, disobedience, and refusal even to *acknowledge his existence*; the fact, that, as far as we have investigated things, they have proved better, all things considered, than they otherwise could be; the gratuitous good every where abounding, by no means indispensable to existence—as, for example, the melody of the strains which charm the ear, the beauty of the colours which ravish the eye, the fragrantcy of the odours which regale the nostrils, the palatability of the nourishment provided for our sustenance, the pleasurable sensations derived from feeling, and, above all, the moral and intellectual gratification derived to the mind from the exercise of its powers on their appropriate objects: all these are so many demonstrations of the benevolence of the deity. Were he *malevolent*, life would be rendered a scene of misery; and happiness, should it ever occur, as an unavoidable consequence of the plan that could produce the greatest amount of evil, would excite all the attention which calamities now do. Our efforts to alleviate wretchedness would only make it doubly wretched; forbearance and mercy on the part of the supreme would be unknown, and injustice and cruelty occupy their place; gratuitous evil would take the place of gratuitous good; and sounds would become hoarse thunder, colours be changed to the gore of death, noisome exhalations float on every breeze, wormwood and gall be our sustenance, our every touch thrill with agony, and conceptions horrific haunt our intellectual vision. Such would be the system of a God of malevolence—a system how different from that which exists!

God then is good, indisputably good, transcendentally good. And surely a being so good; a being creating sensitive existences innumerable, for the purpose of conferring happiness;

making all things for beneficial purposes; causing the existence of immense gratuitous good; pardoning the penitent, and forbearing long with the impenitent:—such a being cannot be supposed to be morally capable of causing or even permitting unnecessary evil. Hence, the existence of evil cannot be attributed to a want of benevolence in the deity.

But, is it therefore to be attributed to a deficiency of power? Most assuredly not. Is not he who called forth the universe from nonentity, and who now sustains it in being, and regulates its operations, able to prevent the sting of a wasp, or the bite of a flea? What blasphemous puerility! Cannot the being who creates the means and the agents of evil, *forbear* to create them? Which requires the greater exercise of power—to *create* or to *forbear* to create? I am told that even man can prevent some evil; and this I admit. I do not however admit, that he can prevent all the evil without the “rod” which he can with it. The “rod system” may be “getting out of fashion” with some; but it must be on the same visionary ground on which the *law* system is becoming unfashionable with them. Both schemes are equally whimsical and disorganizing. But to return to the argument. If man can prevent some evil, cannot God do the same? The reason he *does* not, is evidently because he sees it best for *him* not to do it, how proper soever it might be for *man* in *his* sphere to prevent it. Or is God in very deed more impotent than man? What means my opponent by his self-contradictions, first asserting, that it must be for the want of power that God does not prevent evil, and then saying, that such a want of power would render him inferior to man? What is this but asserting, that God is inferior to man, or that there is no God? Here, sir, is a dilemma from which there is no escape. Choose one horn or the other—blasphemy or atheism. And this I am told, is Plato’s having the better of me. Yes, Plato, it would seem, admits that God can roll up the mountain billows, and rend the solid earth, and yet, that he cannot crush a venomous insect! Ridiculous! superlatively ridiculous! But his proof. This is truly a curiosity. It consists in this: that “he does the one, and does not do the other.” Just as if a being has not the physical power to do any thing but what he does. Plato overlooked the attribute of divine wisdom altogether, as a regulator of the *exercise* of divine power. And this is the God, if any, which *my opponent* can admit! But he cannot admit a God that would not prevent the sting of an insect if he could. No. He cannot admit a God that is equal to himself in power and wisdom! Still, when seized by a fit of “modesty,” he assures us that he knows *nothing* himself—but ever and anon he becomes omniscient, and can prescribe rules the most minute for the regulation of infinite wisdom.

The sum of the matter then is this: that God is perfectly benevolent, and infinite in power. Hence it follows, that the existence of evil is to be attributed neither to a want of good-

ness nor power on his part; and the only possible alternative that is left is, to attribute it to his infinite wisdom. But it must at once be obvious, that we cannot perceive *wherein* the wisdom of its permission consists in all cases; for, to be able to see this, would be to be omniscient ourselves. In some cases, we can perceive his great wisdom, and see that nothing is redundant, nothing deficient, nothing that can be bettered. Take for example the human frame. And many other things which at first sight appear defective, do, on thorough investigation, prove to be the best possible. How many things whose appropriate uses were once unknown, have since been turned to the best account! It is not to be supposed, then, that, *any thing* in nature is in vain. The being that has such regard to utility, and that exercises such consummate skill and wisdom in cases to us known, would not, *could* not degrade these glorious attributes, by the production of fantastic and useless works. When I witness the devastations of the tornado and inundation, or behold the earth parched with heat, and its inhabitants swept away by pestilence; when I see the mountain summit peer through the clouds, and hear the crash of its falling crags; when I read of mighty earthquakes, and the eruption of volcanoes: all these things are so many evidences to me of wisdom too great for my comprehension. So far am I from considering them marks of *no* wisdom, that I regard them as among the strongest proofs of *wisdom infinite*. 'Tis then I think the deity is carrying on his mightiest and most stupendous operations. But, last of all, could I suppose him the author, or even the tolerator, of avoidable misery and sin? The thought is blasphemous in the highest degree.

I hasten to the brief consideration of my remaining evidences of a deity.

First. The present appearance of the earth. Suppose a particle of dust to be washed into the ocean in a million of years; or suppose in the same period a grain of sand to be detached from the massive mountain, and conveyed by the rains that drench the earth into the valley; the time would at length arrive when every mountain would be laid low, the soil be washed into the abyss, and the whole face of the globe be covered with water. Now, it is well known, that a levelling process infinitely more rapid than this is in progress. Are not our rivers continually conveying the earth in large quantities into the ocean, forming sand-bars, shoals, and even islands, near their mouths? Do not the liquid torrents, as they pour down the sides of hills and mountains, precipitate in their course large masses of their surface, and even huge rocks, into the vales below? Do not the frosts of winter rend in twain the mountain ledges, through whose fissures filter the dissolving snows of spring, and the copious showers of summer, by which an undermining process is going on, producing those mountain slides, and those overwhelming *avalanches*, which spread such

terror and devastation in their fall? Does not the alternate action of frost, and sun, and rain, reduce to dust the very rocks, and convey them away by atoms to the great reservoir of the ocean?—Think now of a past eternity. And when, by the slowest process which scepticism could desire, it shall appear to a demonstration, that the hills and mountains must all have been levelled, and the whole surface of the globe mantled by the liquid sheet, an undiminished eternity remains beyond. Behold then the *real* earth. Here is a fallen crag; there, a bald-headed mountain. In this place the sea has receded; in that, encroached. But the great features of the globe still remain, though furrowed thus slightly by time. Can these be the marks of eternal ages? Demonstration thunders, No! But if not eternal, the world must have had a beginning, and therefore a creator.

Second. The present amount of the population of the earth. Population is of an increasive nature, whatever may be the case with particular countries at particular periods. We learn from history, that the human race a few thousand years ago were few in number, compared with the present amount, and that there were at that time vast tracts of uninhabited land which are now inhabited. Had the race therefore been eternal, it is demonstrable that the earth could not now contain her inhabitants. Not a nook, not a corner, capable of cultivation, or of being rendered so, would be unoccupied. The whole world would be a highly cultivated garden—a cluster of cities, towns, and villages; every fathomable portion of the mighty deep would be transformed into artificial land, and covered with a dense population; and innumerable multitudes, Chinese-like, would dwell in floating habitations on the bosom of the waters. Compare this with the actual, semi-populated state of the earth at the present time. Can it be, then, that the human race are eternal? Impossible! But if not eternal, *they* too must have had a creator.

Third. The present state of knowledge and improvement. These are of a progressive nature. If we go back as far as history can carry us, how vast do we find the difference in these respects between those times and the present day! Even *letters*, necessary and invaluable as they are, were invented but three thousand six hundred and fifty years ago; and money, all-convenient money, but two thousand seven hundred and thirty. Necessity is said to be the mother of invention. If then the race are eternal, how is it that they did not hit upon inventions so extremely necessary and convenient, till within three or four thousand years? How is it, that, after having been from all eternity immersed in stationary barbarism, they should all at once set off on so rapid a career of improvement as within so short a period to have attained to their present eligible condition? The idea is inadmissible: man must have had a beginning, and consequently a maker.

Fourth. The concurrent voice of all history and tradition. All authentic historians, and all tradition having the least air of authenticity, concur in representing ancient times to have been the infancy of things, as exhibited in the paucity of the human race, the insignificance of nations, the small portion of the world inhabited, the small progress of knowledge and improvement, and, in fine, in all those traces which a world in its infancy *would* exhibit.

Fifth. The lack of any memorial whatever of the world's eternity. During the period which, by history, we know it to have existed, men have lived, events have transpired, and places have existed, whose memory will descend to posterity till time shall be no more. But who were the Alexanders, the Cæsars, the Napoleons; what the wars, the revolutions, the conquests; where the Babylons, the Romes, the Parises, of a past eternity? "And echo answers, Where?"

Sixth. The common consent of mankind, that there is a God. And, in a case of this nature, what, I would ask, is the common *consent* of mankind, but the common *sense* of mankind? And do not sceptics themselves make this common sense, or reason, the *all in all*? very reason decides in our favour; mankind believe in a God. This then is the decision of the common sense of mankind; that is, of reason, of nature—and therefore of truth.

Seventh. The existence of rational, and even of irrational beings. A stream can rise no higher than its fountain; therefore, human and even brutal intellect must have an intelligent cause.

Eighth. Divine providence. Cases innumerable might be adduced, of *special* divine interposition; and the *general* superintendence of divine providence over the concerns of mankind is too plain to escape universal observation.

Ninth. Experience. Christians *know* there is a God by their own experience. This is *knowledge* to themselves, but *evidence* to others.

Tenth. Revelation. This renders it *certain* that there is a God, though every other evidence were to fail. That a revelation has been given I propose to prove, after finishing the discussion of that question.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

TO ORIGEN BACHELER.

LETTER VII.

April 23,

A man is not to be suffered simply to remain in cases where a loud expression of opinion would deprive and children of bread, without being accused of self-hypocrisy! When the world learns to honour honesty approve, instead of prosecuting, heterodox virtue, 'twill enough for it to insist upon all men saying, at all risks, think. It ought to be more than satisfied, meanwhile, are found willing thus to incur its ill-humour for the sake of doing it a service.

The bearing which the digression regarding the real cause and effect has on the subject before us, is this: There may be the only, positive evidence of a cause is the distinction of a precedence. This evidence is furnished in the artificial design, and is wanting in the case of (what is called) natural design. But the argument is somewhat abstract and metaphysical, and I will not insist upon it. I merely say that if Origen Bachelier's letters uniformly and immediately preceded Robert Dale Owen's *throughout all nature*, we should be sufficiently justified in believing in a necessary relation between them as cause and effect.

I shall not dispute with you about words. If you can suppose immediately before the moving of two attracted bodies a tendency to move; and then further, immediately before that tendency, a something preceding it, and choose to call that something *attraction*, you may do so. But I see no reason why we were not as rational to go back three links as two, or even to need go back any at all. Things approach each other in all we know. Why not be satisfied to call this regular sequence of motion (since it is all we can understand of it) attraction?

It is truly curious to observe what the human mind is capable of itself to believe! Formerly, my opponent did not choose to assume the optimist's position, and declare that "evil is not evil." But how does he now creep out of his dilemma? By telling us, (in the most pointed language of optimism) that famine and pestilence, tornados and earthquakes are "evidences of wisdom too great for his comprehension." When these are produced, he "supposes the Deity can perform his mightiest and most stupendous operations." And he tells us of pestilence: the tornado of *crime*—the earthquake of *what of them?* They, too, are "the strongest proof of the wisdom of God infinite." War, rapine, cold-blooded murder—the *typhoon* which slays, like that of Moses, men, women, and children—infant at the breast—the passions that rankle in the heart

darken with their foul eclipse the fair face of nature—the fanaticism that rejoices in the heretic's death-groan, and thinks to propitiate its God by inventing every day some new torture for his creatures—but why further enumerate?—*all* the blasting crimes that devastate this suffering world, are “so many evidences of wisdom too great for comprehension!” When the God of the Jews is dissatisfied with the half barbarity of his chosen people which caused them to murder all the adult males only among the Midianites, and when by the mouth of Moses he bids them “kill all the women, and kill all the males among the little ones, but the women-children keep alive for themselves” *—then this ultra-brutality is “the strongest proof of wisdom infinite!” “It is then”—when engaged in issuing such commands—that my opponent “thinks the deity is carrying on his mightiest and most stupendous operations!” Common sense! common sense! thou art a precious gift! I would we knew how to value thee!

Must I argue against such a creed? When I am told that we cannot tell whether the vilest and basest crimes that have sunk men below the most grovelling among brutes, be not *for the best*—no, no! the extravagance is far greater even than this—when I am told that *the more horrible the brutality, the stronger the proof of wisdom infinite!*—and then bid to use the weapons of logic against the position,—I feel, that if *the heart* refute not this outrage on its holiest sympathies, the arguments of cold reason—though numerous, powerful, overwhelming, as any earthly arguments can be—will fall on a dull ear, and be repeated to an impassive judgment!

And wherefore this insult to the common sense of mankind? Why this assertion, that we are blasphemers and arrogators of omniscience, if we presume to doubt whether the vice and crime that deluge the world are the work of omnipotent benevolence? For what purpose are we thus denied the right of judgment in a case, than which a clearer was never shone upon by the noon-day sun of actual perception?—To furnish an imaginary apology for an unseen God! To solve a fancied difficulty about an unknown creator of the universe!

And what is this great difficulty?—“If God cannot do what man is daily doing,—that is, ‘discard the evil and retain the good’—he is less powerful (you argue) than man; but this (you say) is blasphemous puerility.” It does not follow, because man, in his limited sphere, can to a small extent discard evil and retain good, that a God who cannot do this in the sphere of the universe, and to an infinite extent, is less powerful than man; but it *does* follow, (and this was my argument) that if a God cannot do on a large scale what man can do on a

* *Numbers*, chap. xxxi., ver. 17. The passage is too indecent to be quoted in all its brutality.

small one, such a God is far—far, indeed, from being *omnipotent*.

But now, suppose it *did* follow (as you say it does) that a God who cannot “discard evil and retain good,” throughout the earth, were more impotent than man, and suppose that it is irrational—or say impossible—to imagine such a God; what follows? *I pray you, sir, to mark!* Your God is such an one. Your God (as you yourself have told us half a dozen times) cannot discard the evil and retain the good. This is the very reason you give why evil is not discarded. Your God, then, (on your own premises, remember, not on mine) is more impotent than man. To imagine your God is (in your own language, for I never permit myself any such) blasphemous puerility. Strange that you should talk of dilemmas!

Observe, then, *I* argued, that a God who cannot, like man, discard the evil and retain the good, is *not omnipotent*. You argue, that such a God is *less powerful than man*, and *cannot exist*—quite forgetting, that that very God is your own!

The same polite offer, therefore, which you are good enough to make me, of either horn of the dilemma, strictly reverts, on your own showing, to yourself. It is you, not I, nor Plato, who have to choose between what you call blasphemy and atheism.

Let me request you, however, to bear in mind, that it is no business of mine to defend the consistency of Plato's God, or of any other. Had your arguments, instead of applying as they do to your own case, applied to his—had you disproved the possibility of his theological conception—you would have gained nothing for your argument. It would then only have appeared, that if a creating God exist, we human beings find it difficult or impossible to imagine consistent attributes for him—a position I am not prepared to deny.

To one other expression in your letter I must cursorily advert. It is where you adduce, as the most remarkable instance of God's benevolence, his “forbearance to inflict the full desert of sin on the wicked, notwithstanding their ingratitude, disobedience, and refusal even to acknowledge his existence.” You imagine, then, that it is an act of exalted virtue in your God to refrain from punishing me because I do not know whether he lives or not. I want words, sir, to express the degree of imbecility which I should be compelled to attribute to a God, who should be angry (even for a moment) on account of so paltry a trifle as this. In the first place, what can it signify to him, whether an insect like me acknowledge his existence or not? Is he so fond of being glorified, that he must needs set it down as a hateful crime, that one of his creatures did not find him out, and abstains from all stated, formal, verbal forms of prayer and praise? But again: he *knows* that I am ignorant as to his existence; he sees fit to abstain from

enlightening me; and it is to be regarded as an instance of ineffable mercy, that he does not punish me, to atone for his own deficiency in revealing himself!*

If we are to imagine a God, sir, let it be one endowed with common sense—one who will not first conceal himself from us, and then punish our sin in not being able to perceive what he conceals. Let it be a God who will listen to an honest defence, and decide according to principles of the commonest justice.

If such a God exist, and if a day indeed arrive when I shall stand before his judgment-seat to answer for the deeds done in the body—then and there will I defend (let me say it simply and sincerely, and without offence)—then and there will I defend, as I now defend, my honest scepticism. Then—when the secrets of all hearts shall be known, there—before that being who can distinguish and appreciate sincerity, will I say, as I say now, that for my heresies I am blameless. If Origen Bachelier be there to accuse me, how shall he establish his accusations? Let us imagine the scene:

Accuser.—During thy mortal life, thou didst turn a deaf ear to holy warnings.

Mortal.—Nay, I heard them, but believed them not.

Accuser.—Thou hast not known on earth the great judge before whom thou now standest in heaven.

Mortal.—True. There I knew him not; for he concealed his being from me: here I know him; for he reveals to me his existence.

Accuser.—I warned thee of his existence.

Mortal.—And I believed not the warning.

Accuser.—Dost thou confess thy fault?

Mortal.—I have no fault to confess; but I confess my human ignorance.

Accuser.—Thy ignorance was thy fault.

Mortal.—To thee! hitherto unknown spirit, I appeal. I knew thee not on earth; for thou didst conceal thy existence from me. I thought not of thee, nor of this day of judgment; I thought only of the earth and of my fellow-mortals. The time which others employed in imagining thy attributes, I spent in improving the talents thou hadst given me, in adding to the happiness of the companions thou hadst placed around me, in improving the earthly habitation thou hadst made my own. I spoke of that which I knew; I never spoke of thee, for I knew thee not. To thee I appeal from this my accuser.

Judge.—Thou hast well spoken: I placed thee on earth, not to dream of my being, but to enjoy thine own. Thou hast well done: I made thee a man, that thou mightest give and receive

* *Themistius*, a friend of the emperor Julianus, supposed, that the deity wishes to hide himself, and that this is a sufficient proof that he does not wish all men to be of the same religion, but leaves them to think about him as they choose. (See *Brucker*, vol. ii., p. 490.) The supposition is natural enough, if we are to speak and think about the intentions of a deity at all.

happiness among thy fellows, not that thou shouldst imagine the ways and the wishes of Gods. Even as thou condemnest not the worm that has crawled beneath thy feet because it knew thee not, so neither do I condemn thy worldly ignorance of me.

I have now briefly to review your concluding paragraphs, and shall number mine so as to correspond with yours.

First. You surely, sir, have given but scanty attention to geology, or even the outlines of the natural history of the earth. Else it could not have escaped you, that the great operations of nature form, as it were, an immense circle, of which you have chosen to put forward only a mere segment. The mountain torrent does indeed descend, and carries with it soil and rocks, in its downward course. But it *ascends* also, in the shape of vapour, again to fall on the very mountain, perhaps, that had formerly received it; and to generate, in the bosom of that mountain, woods and forests, and other vegetable productions innumerable. These, decaying, form fresh soil, which in its turn gives forth a new vegetable generation, in like manner to flourish and to decay.

And then, you speak as if there were no such thing as mineral growth. You talk of the rock that is hurled by the flood from the dissolving snow into the vale below; you forget the work of progressive production that is going on, even under the eternal snows of the mountain top; yes, in every cave and fissure where minerals find a place. You forget how islands are formed even in the midst of the ocean, at first by rising beds of coral; (the work, it is said, of a diminutive marine animal;) how sand is wafted to, or deposited on, these barren rocks; how seeds are dropped there, by some bird of passage, perhaps; until the coral bed becomes a habitable country, with all its varieties of hill and dale, rocks, earths, lakes, and rivers. You forget that, throughout all nature, there is, as it were, a compensating process, somewhat analagous to that in the human frame, in virtue of which accidental loss and injury is repaired, and that which evaporates or decays to-day is replaced to-morrow.

Of all subjects a theologian ought most carefully to avoid geology.

Second. You are equally out in your political economy, as in your geological speculations. Population, *unrestrained*, (that is, unchecked by vice, misery, famine, war, poverty, and other causes, including prudential considerations,) is doubtless of an increasive nature. But when has it ever been thus unrestrained? When has the world existed without misery, without poverty, without war, without famine? But these checks may, nay, often have, (as in the case of the poor Indians) rendered population retrogressive instead of progressive. We know that this has been especially the case in former ages of ignorance. In corroboration of this sentiment, and in illustration of the immense difference of opinion which exists on the subject of

population, I might quote from the celebrated Montesquieu, one of the leaders in a debate which was held about the beginning of the last century, on the comparative populousness of ancient nations. In his *Lettres Persanes*, (*Lettre CVIII.*) after enumerating the various countries, Italy, Rome, Sicily, Greece, Spain, Persia, South America, and others, which retain now but the shadow of their former greatness, and scarcely a tythe of their former population, he concludes by saying: "Upon a calculation the most exact that matters of this sort will admit, I am led to think, that the earth does not contain now fully the *fiftieth part* of the human beings that inhabited it in the time of Cæsar."

This calculation appears to me very extravagant, however celebrated the name that vouches for it. But, extravagant or not, it affords proof that we must have something more than mere assertion to establish the position, that the earth was a desert a few thousand years ago.

See, in further elucidation of the above ideas, and of the strange opinion of Montesquieu, that "if population goes on decreasing at this rate, in one thousand years more, the race of man will be extinct," his *Esprit des Lois*, *Livre XXIII., chap. xix., et sequ.*

With such checks in continual activity, the population of the world might be less at the end of a million of centuries than at its commencement. It is absurd, therefore, to urge this as an argument against the eternity of the universe.

Third. Human knowledge is progressive; but who shall fix a first point from which it started, or the utmost limit to which it may attain? Nay, who shall say how many important improvements (not only mere trifles like the Grecian fire or the art of staining cathedral windows,) may not have been made, and lost again, during the physical changes and moral convulsions that have agitated and desolated the earth?

But again: that which is behind us appears to us gross darkness. So also will our state of demi-civilization doubtless appear (and not without reason) to our descendants. They will wonder, just as we do now, that we, their ancestors, had so long remained immersed in social barbarism.

Fourth. Shortsighted historians, such for instance as those who describe the ancient Jews as the only chosen and favoured people of God, might, and no doubt did, suppose themselves and their paltry tribes, the world; they might, and no doubt did, (in the absence of all correct tradition) imagine that the world had just begun, as thousands have since believed that it was just about to end. But the imaginations of barbarians prove nothing.

Fifth. What sort of "memorial of the world's eternity" would you have? The very rocks that compose the written mountains of Arabia grew, and will decay. Yet what imaginable species of ancient record more eternal than they?

You yourself remind me, that writing and printing were unknown four thousand years ago. How, then, should we know any thing of the Cæsars, the Alexanders, or the Babylons of a past eternity? Fables enough we have; and what millions of infinitely older fables may not have sunk, in past ages, to oblivion!

Sixth. If Galileo had listened to this argument, we should be pretty astronomers to-day. Men, in the ages of their inexperience, *will* make blunders: and if the blunders are to be defended, because sanctioned by the "common sense of mankind," we may as well sit down with our hands across, and at once abandon every thing like improvement.

The opinion "that the common consent of mankind" is satisfactory proof in a disputed point, had its rise, probably, in the notion regarding *innate ideas*. That notion is now exploded; and, since the days of Locke, scarcely the most orthodox divine will sustain so utterly illogical a hypothesis.*

Seventh. If you can substantiate that man is a stream and God a fountain, then I will admit the accuracy of your comparison, and the proof it furnishes of a God.

Eighth. Even the rational portion of the Christian community now abandon the fancy of a special providence, which upsets pleasure boats on Sundays, and burns theatres. As to a general providence, the existence of evil renders it *certain* that no superintending spirit infinite in goodness and power exists.

Ninth. I have already said, that to those who tell me they *feel* God, I have only one reply to make, viz., that I do not feel him.

Tenth. We shall see when we come to discuss the subject, whether there be any proof in favour of a revelation. If none, of course it cannot prove a God.

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

LETTER VIII.

New-York, April 30, 1831.

SIR,

What means this language in relation to recanting infidels! their "*silence*" in cases where loud expression of opinion would

* There have been those who saw clearly enough whither the discarding of that old theory would lead. Jean Cochet, a Sorbonne doctor, says, (in his work, "*La Metaphysique*," p. 103,) "that to deny the existence of innate ideas is to furnish the infidels victorious weapons wherewith to combat the proof of the existence of a God." What will Locke and some of his Christian followers say to this?

their families," &c. Instances innumerable might be adduced, in which they not only cease to advocate infidelity, but become zealous advocates of Christianity;—and all this not because their wives and children are in danger of need and distress, but because they become convinced of the truth of religion. And 'tis a calumny on their character, to represent them as acting contrary to their real sentiments in this.

But what a fine view of the *integrity* and *moral* character of sceptics have we here presented to us—forbearing to relinquish their belief from interested motives, and justified in their faithfulness by their leaders!

In regard to the argument of cause and effect, I have but little to add to what I have already said. An *effect* is evidence of a cause, whether we can *see* the cause or not; for there can be no effect without a cause. But, as I said in my last, mere coincidence and sequence are not evidence of cause and effect, though we *were* to see them. Our letters in this discussion usually precede and follow one another, and yet they are neither the cause nor effect of one another. As to their preceding or following one another "*throughout all nature*," it is not to conceive the meaning of this language.

When we go back from an effect to a cause, there is no other, but a "link to go back unto." But we *should* go back to the link, the *cause*, because it is absurd to suppose an effect without a cause. We know that things approach one another, but this is *not* all we know. We know there must be a cause, a power, concerned in the movement; for motion is not an effect, and an effect must have a cause. And this is the reason I am not satisfied to call this effect or motion attraction; I should be calling an effect a cause.

In saying that God acts in the *wisest* manner possible, I do not mean to lay the ground of *optimism*; for it may not on the whole be the wisest way for him to exclude *real evil* from the universe.

Herein consists the difference between optimism and pessimism, the position which I have assumed: the former makes *all* evil good; the latter allows at least some of it to be evil, and makes it an inseparable consequent of a good, productive of the greatest possible amount of good; the chief part of which good would of course be, the glory of God—an item which optimists and sceptics are extremely apt to overlook, in their intense anxiety for the mere interest of man. Little do they care what becomes of holiness and the divine government, so they can get their own purposes accomplished and a comfortable destiny for themselves. But they know, that man is not the principal being in the universe, and that the divine glory is of more consequence, independent of all other things combined.

I ask if earthquakes, tornados, &c., are evidences of a goodness in their author. If not, I next ask how the *curse of the Canaanites* by the Jews at God's command, is

such an evidence. If God can, consistently with good, destroy communities, men, women, and children, by earthquakes, &c., why not by the sword? This however is a justification of bloodshed and devastation, in cases unattended by him. But here again I ask, if his forbearing to prevent even *such* bloodshed and devastation, or *any other moral* such an evidence. To say that it is, is to impeach his character, and to utter the rankest blasphemy. But if it is an evidence of a want of goodness, is it an evidence of a want of power? To say this, is likewise blasphemous, a degradation of one of the divine attributes; and it is puerile and absurd, inasmuch as God every where exercises greater power than would be requisite to check and prevent whatever. Nor have I represented, in any part of the discussion, that he has not the *physical* power to prevent evil, or to prevent all the evil and retain all the good which he can retain and prevent. No. I have expressly admitted that he *has* this physical power; and hence I have argued that his *not* preventing that evil must be attributed solely to *moral* inability, which is merely an inability *consistently* to do an unwise thing, or to leave one which it would be *wisely* for him to do, or to *cause* to be done, *undone*. Our readers know, that this has long been the bearing of my argument, and even my express language. And they know, too, that my opponent has said in so many words, that he would not ascribe from him the attribute of omnipotence as an empty and a useless thing, if it would not enable him to discard evil and retain good, which even the insect man is daily effecting. They know he has denounced such omnipotence as weak and misapplied, unworthy to be bartered for the few short years of human life, and such a God as a bungler, compared with *sage* man! Is this but making God, *if* unable to prevent evil, inferior to man? And has he *not* represented him as being unable to prevent evil? Has he not said, "omnipotence *could* prevent evil, but benevolence *would*, have prevented evil?" Has he not said, "A being is *not* all-powerful who wishes to prevent evil, but *cannot*: a being is not benevolent who *can* prevent evil, but *will not*?" Has he not said, "The existence of misery is evidence that there exists no power *both* able and willing to prevent evil's existence?" And what is this but making God unable to prevent evil? And what are both propositions together, but making God inferior to man, and his power an empty, useless thing? And what is blasphemy if this is not? But no: I do not suppose he *intends* to blaspheme. He cannot believe in such a God as this, which he says there must be; and it therefore follows that he is an atheist, disbeliever in any God whatever. Charity compels me to view him in the light; for I cannot suppose he intends to blaspheme. He is either a blasphemer or an atheist he *must* be; and therefore, between the two evils I will choose the less, and pronounce him the latter.

am I, however, from considering this less evil than "paltry trifles" which he does. Far am I from considering it a light thing not to believe in a God, the natural and necessary result of which non-belief must be, to render him no obedience, no service, no homage, no reverence. Nor can I admit, that, because a man *does* not believe in a God, he therefore *can* not. An individual may disbelieve for want of proper examination. It is not supposable, that God would leave his rational creatures without sufficient evidence of his existence. It is therefore by no means certain, that the sentence pronounced on atheists in the judgment day, will be as favourable as my opponent in his last letter seemed to imagine.

I admit, as I have heretofore remarked, the existence of real evil. I admit, that, if all the present good could be retained, and the evil prevented, the universe would be a better one than it now is. But this we have seen to be impossible in the nature of things. It does not therefore follow, that the universe as it is, is on the whole a poorer one, than that one would be from which the present evil, and consequently its inseparable good, should be excluded. Hence, the existence of evil is no argument against the perfection of any of the divine attributes. Yea, it is an argument in their favour, showing that God, though mercifully and holily disposed, chooses that system which even involves misery and sin, on account of its producing the greatest possible amount of good. Now, the glory of God is the first and chief good; which glory he regards, not selfishly, but because it *ought* to be regarded. Had sin never existed, his glorious character could not have been fully manifested—his holiness in its punishment, and his mercy in its pardon. And were not the misery consequent on sin to exist, the necessary check would be wanting, and the moral universe would become one vast Aeldama. Now, if we subtract the misery occasioned by sin from the whole mass in existence, how small a comparative amount remains! Nor am I prepared to say, that the *necessary* degree of *virtue* could be elicited, or *any* degree of *moral responsibility* attached, were not the rational creatures of God to have their day of probation, their time of trial, their period of liability to fall into sin; for, the greater the temptation resisted, the greater the virtue exercised. So much for *moral* evil, and its inseparable misery. For the rest—for earthquakes, famine, pestilence; for poisons; for the conflicts of the animal creation; and for the various evils of this description which might be named: in all these cases, as far as they have been fully investigated, divine wisdom is clearly perceptible; whence it is reasonable to infer, that, could we investigate all other cases, it would appear in them likewise. But, at any rate, the consideration that we are not omniscient should deter us from deciding, that there is *in reality* a lack of wisdom, even if we can see none; and consequently, that no case of this nature can furnish

us with an argument against the divine existence, or the perfection of the divine attributes.

Let us now very briefly attend to the evidences by me adduced at the close of my last letter.

First. *The present appearance of the earth.* My attention to geology, sir, has not been so "scanty" as to have prevented me from noticing that many random theories have been invented in relation to the subject, totally at variance with inductive science. And among those theories is the one denominated the *compensating* process, which I perceive is adduced in reply to me. The great difficulty with this scheme is, that it is not true. The mountain tops made bare by the *wasting* process, are *not* covered with soil, or replenished with new-grown minerals, but are continually wearing away. Nor were these mountains formed by marine animals, &c., after the manner of coral reefs. They are primeval elevations, as their granitic peaks, unmingled with any organic substances whatever, demonstrably declare. But the small waste which they have yet suffered, shows that they cannot, for a very great period, have been exposed to the ravages of time. The world, therefore, cannot have been eternal, and this evidence remains in undiminished strength.

Second. *The population of the earth.* On this point, too, I find my opponent at odds with fact. The population subject is not one of theory, but of figures; and "figures won't lie." 'Tis a *fact*, sir, proveable by all history, that, notwithstanding all the "vice, misery, famine, war, pestilence," and every thing else, that have happened during the last four thousand years, the human race are vastly more numerous at this moment than they were at the commencement of that period. It is a little curious, however, that, if my opponent believes his own theory on this subject, he should be so fearful of a surplus population, as to take the pains to write a book to *check* its too rapid increase; and pre-eminently curious, to see him, when in that book he has introduced Malthus, with his alarming calculations how soon the world would be overrun were it not for some check, introducing in this controversy Montesquieu with his, deploring the circumstance, that the checks already existing threaten soon to extinguish the species. These counteracting causes, then, do *not* prevent the increase of the race; this semi-populated globe cannot therefore have been eternally in existence, an inhabited world; and *this* evidence, as well as the preceding one, remains unimpaired.

Third. *Knowledge and improvement.* Here again my opponent is out: *fact* is once more against him. Notwithstanding all the arts and all the knowledge that have been lost, mankind at the present period are immensely in advance of the nations of antiquity in these respects. Let but the same ratio be preserved in retracing the past, and it would not be necessary to proceed far, before arriving at the point of total human ignorance.

three of the foregoing cases, my opponent has violated that philosophical rule laid down by Bacon and Newton, sanctioned by common sense: "that no other causes of events can be admitted, than what are known to be operative, and adequate to account for the phenomena." Inductive rule forbids the resort to hypothetical assumptions, the existence of which cannot be proved; and a departure from it is one in an endless labyrinth of idle whims and fantastic notions. The very case of Montesquieu, above noticed, is an illustration of the truth of this observation.

th. *History and tradition.* These are not "the imaginary barbarians." History and *mythology* are very different

Historians in relating *facts* do not give matters of opinion. Showing the world to have been in its infancy a few hundred years ago, by the relation of the facts which I mention in my last, is quite different from expressing an *opinion* that such was the case.

l. *The lack of any memorial of the world's eternity.* The mountains, or rather the hieroglyphical, mountains of Arabia, are far from being such a memorial. It takes no eternity for matter to stand and form rocks. Numerous petrifications have occurred since the memory of man. But, for argument's sake, suppose mountains to have been as ancient as scepticism itself; why, then, could not the memory of the heroes of eternity have been transmitted to us by some such means as, seeing no "imaginable species of ancient record is more reliable than they?" or by oral transmission from age to age, facts, prior to the invention of letters, have been transmitted? I admit that "we have *fables* enough" pretending to vast antiquity; but 'tis *fact*, not *fable*, that proves a thing. Where are the *facts* of a past eternity? "And echo still answers, Where?"

1. *The common consent of mankind.* On a subject like the divine existence, if not on uninvestigated scientific questions, the common consent, or, in other words, the common consent of mankind, is no trivial consideration. The evidences on this subject are tangible, and easy of apprehension—such as common sense" would not be likely to misunderstand. I am not now of "innate ideas," but merely of human understanding, whether innate or not. But what means this? A depreciation of common sense!—reason!—nature! 'Tis not now that she will not subserve his present purpose; but she will be propitious, and how would he eulogize her!

nth. *The stream and its fountain.* If man were a literal fountain, and God a literal fountain, my language on this point in comparison would be no comparison. The argument which I would draw from the simile of a stream and its fountain is this: that the fountain, either human or brutal, cannot be produced by an antecedent cause—a fountain lower than its stream. Fail not, but meet this argument.

th. *Divine Providence.* Self-styled rational Christians

may doubt what they please; they are no rule for me. I will in my next give a few instances of what I consider special divine interposition; to doubt which appears to me *much less rational* than to admit it. But with regard to a *general* providence, this is admitted by all but nothingarians and atheists; and to make *the existence of evil* an argument against it, is assuming one of the very points in debate between us.

Ninth. *Experience.* Suppose a native of the torrid zone were to say to my opponent, "You say you have felt ice; I have not felt it:" would he consider this a sufficient offset to his own experience on the subject? Would he not think, that his *testimony* was a reason why the other should *believe* in ice, although he "knew nothing about it?" Would he consider the *non*-experience of the other an equipoise for his own *experience*? But we see that it would be an *incorrect* rule, at any rate. We see that it would lead to error in the very case here adduced. And yet my opponent adopts this rule himself. He merely says to those who say they know God, that he does *not* know him. And what then? If *his* assertion proves that *he* does not know him, *theirs* proves that *they* do know him. And if they do know him, then he exists; nor does his *non*-experience prove that he does *not* exist, but only, that he has not experienced that he exists—as good a reason for his declining to *believe* in his existence on the testimony of *others*, as would be that of the man of the torrid zone above mentioned, for declining to believe in ice on *his* testimony, merely because *he himself* had never experienced the existence of any. And now, sir, permit me to say, that this evidence has not been met at all. A mere negative can never disprove a positive.

Tenth. *Revelation.* We will see, ere long, whether there is *not* proof of this; and consequently, whether the divine existence is not proved from this source.

As our discussion of this subject is drawing to a close, it is proper that a few ideas be now presented on the divine unity.

The first argument for this which I would adduce is, that it is of importance that men know how many Gods there are, that they may know how many to worship and serve. But, if left to conjecture upon any number more than one, they are altogether in the dark, having no data by which to decide between two and millions. That there is, however, at least one, they can readily gather from the tokens of wisdom, goodness, and power, every where exhibited. Were there more than one, it is reasonable to conclude, that a revelation specifying the number would have been made, by which men could have some means of regulating their worship in a proper manner towards them. In default, therefore, of such a revelation, the rational conclusion is, that there is but one.

The next argument is the nature of *self-existence*. Whatever is self-existent, is *necessarily* existent. The mystery is, that any thing should ever have existed at all. But to suppose there is

more than one self-existence, is to open the way for millions—millions of independent existences—liable, perchance, to conflict with one another, and to render the universe an arena of strife omnipotent and eternal, contrary to the state of things actually existing. Besides, it is unreasonable to suppose, that there could be two separate beings just alike. But if *not* just alike, the one or the other must be imperfect and finite. *If* just alike, they must be radically one and the same.

The nature of *infinity* is the next argument which I would adduce. If there is an infinite being, that being includes all fullness, and more such beings would be unnecessary for any purpose whatever. Nay, to say there are more infinite beings than one, is a contradiction and an absurdity; for it is saying, after having admitted that there is one being that includes all possible power, wisdom, goodness, &c., that there are other beings that have just as much as he has besides, and therefore, that the attributes of all combined, would make as many times more or greater attributes than any one's alone, as there were of beings possessing them. Take, for example, the attribute of power. Allow that any two beings possess equal power separately. Their combined power would of course be double the amount of that of either alone. But *infinite* power is all possible power—as great power as can be—so great that it cannot be increased. To say, then, that there are more beings than one, each possessing infinite power in himself, separate from one common source, is as much as to say that there is infinitely more or greater than infinite power; which is a self-contradictory absurdity. But suppose there were more Gods than one, and none of them infinite, but all finite. All of them together, no matter how many, would not amount to infinity; for no number of finities can make an infinite. The result of the foregoing argument is, that there *can* be but one infinite being, and that, *unless* there is one such being, all the attributes of all beings combined would make nothing equivalent to him. Hence it follows that there is one infinite God, and one alone.

The manner in which the operations of nature are carried on, shows that there is but one operator. The universe is, as it were, one vast machine, wheel moving wheel, and the whole moved by one main spring. One sole energy causes bodies to fall to the earth, and the stellar hosts to wheel their wonted courses. This energy is unbroken and indivisible. The same may be said of all the great laws and elements of nature. There is but one law of cohesion, one of attraction, one of repulsion, one of vegetation, one of chrystallization, one of animal life; but one element of heat, one element of light, and so on. The operations of nature are not carried on in detached and separate parts by multitudes of Gods, as the ancients used to suppose; but in one grand and harmonious movement, neither requiring nor admitting but one prime mover, that mover himself being evidently possessed of such wisdom and power, as that all the

combined wisdom and power of finite beings could not equal, or be compared with.

And here occurs another idea, which is, that, even were it possible that the *amount* of wisdom and power in any conceivable number of finite beings could equal that of wisdom and power infinite; yet, being possessed by and divided between different beings, it would not be infinite, either in point of applicability or fact. For it does not follow that the united wisdom of two or more beings possessing *equal* knowledge merely, without regard to its *kind*, would amount to twice the sum which that of either would alone; because, beings may be *equal* in knowledge, without being *different* in it. Hence it must be obvious that the concentration of the knowledge of such beings would not increase the amount at all. Finite beings, even men, have, it is true, *some different* ideas; but they have *very many others in common*. All those common ideas do not increase the *mass* of knowledge by being communicated from one to another. But the communication of their *different* ideas do this. Still, when we consider the comparatively small accumulation which accrues to the common stock by the deliberations, it may be, of legislative assemblies, &c., we see at once that their concentrated wisdom, in point of superiority to that of their individual, bears but a small proportion to their superior number. By this illustration, we can readily perceive, how small an approach would the combined wisdom of any number of finite beings whatever make towards wisdom infinite, allowing there could be any approximation at all. Hence it is evident that *no* number of finite intellects, though for multitude like the stars of heaven, or the sands of the ocean shore, could so manage this vast, this mighty universe, with all its countless and *inconceivably* numerous concerns, as to prevent its becoming one immense theatre of wild uproar and confusion. Nought but *one* intellect, able to survey all nature at a glance, could ever, ever preserve its various parts in their harmonious movements. And *such* an intellect must be infinite. Nay, wisdom less than this could not construct the veriest insect. But then the power. And here we can see at once, that almighty power is requisite, to carry on *any part* of the operations of nature. What finite being could sustain himself on nothing, and roll *one* twinkling star, or sweep a flaming comet through the mighty void? What shining host, then, I would ask, with all their angelic strength combined, could turn the wheel stupendous of all nature, and give this vast machine its play? None! none! The wisdom that governs and the power that moves it, must be *one* and *infinite*.

That the doctrine of the divine unity commends itself to sound reason, and the general acceptance of mankind, is another argument in its favour. Notwithstanding the numerous Gods of the heathen, they have generally had one superior to the rest—one Jupiter—one almighty thunderer, to whom all other Gods were

ject. And deists, who reject revelation, but who nevertheless admit a God, admit but one. Indeed, it is particularly worthy of remark that *all* who admit an infinite God, admit but one—and evidently for the reason that the admission of more than one infinite being would be an absurdity. The doctrine of an infinite God, then, is consonant with sound reason; and sceptics, who profess to make reason their guide, should therefore renounce their scepticism, and believe in him.

But if there is an infinite God, his glory is not to be shared by others; for there is no comparison between finite and infinite. No finite Gods can therefore be consistently admitted by those who admit an infinite one. All finite creatures are as nothing in comparison with him, and instead of having any claim to the homage due to the deity, do themselves owe him homage—from the highest archangel that sweeps the immortal realms, down to the veriest infant that can lisp his holy name.

These are the evidences deducible from reason, to say nothing of revelation, which I would assign, for the belief in one, and not in many, Gods. And, whatever some on our own side of the question may hold on the subject, I believe, that there is sufficient evidence in reason and nature to teach the heathen the existence and attributes of the deity; which leaves them inexcusable for their ignorance of the same. But inasmuch as they are ignorant, revelation becomes necessary; which God grants when and where he sees to be *on the whole* for the best.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

TO ORIGEN BACHELER

LETTER VIII.

May 7, 1831.

You must be sadly at a loss for a ground of accusation against "the integrity and moral principle of sceptics and their friends," when you impugn such sentiments as those in the first paragraph of my last letter. I adhere to these sentiments. I risked my reputation and what little fortune I possess, by an expression of heterodoxy; but I do not, and never shall, dissuade others (more especially fathers of families dependent on public opinion for their children's daily bread,) to follow my example. If they deliberately choose to follow it, good and bad as it may be, I excuse their silence. And if my so excusing it be charged against me as a crime, so be it. One article

more or less in the long list which orthodoxy prefers against me, will not much signify.

As to your assertion that there are "instances innumerable of sceptics becoming from conviction zealous advocates of Christianity," it will probably be found, upon strict inquiry, that nine-tenths of the list are just such instances as that you unluckily stumbled on, touching the conversion of the editor of "Priestcraft Unmasked."*

As to the cause and effect argument, I leave our readers to judge between us. They cannot fail to perceive, that your assertion, that there is a second unseen link, called God, to go back to, and no more, is of the same value and cogency as any other mere assertion.

You say that you are no optimist. The optimist, you maintain, "makes *all* evil virtually good," while you "allow some of it to be absolutely bad, but make it an inseparable part of the best system." If this be a distinction, sir, it is one without a difference. No one in his senses, optimist or not, will say *murder is positively, in itself, good*. No optimist says so. He only says, just as you say, that it is a necessary part of an ineffably wise plan. No man, therefore, not absolutely crazy, can be more of an optimist than you.

And this ineffably wise plan, part of which consists in the cold-blooded, deliberate murder of hundreds of thousands of heathen women and children, what is its great object? You tell us, "The glory of God;" an object which you think we are "extremely prone to overlook."

'Twould be much more to the credit of your God, sir, if you too would overlook it. What! the great parent's first object is, not the happiness of his children, but the idle gratification of himself! He brings human beings into existence, and then neglects their welfare, to gratify his own paltry hankering after incense! You say you cannot suppose I intend to blaspheme; neither will I suppose the *intention*, then, in your case.

But if the idle term have a meaning, is it not applicable here? What being so contemptible, so utterly heartless, as an earthly parent, who gives birth to sentient creatures, and then causes or permits them to live in wretchedness, with a view to his own glory? What human creature so worthless as the father who should form a plan of life for his offspring, of which endless misery were a constituent part, while its *chief object* were the gratification of his own grovelling passion for flattery? Would not he be a *monster* who should consent to reap personal glory from the field of human misery, and feel compensated for the never-ceasing groans of torture his system embraces, by the adulatory hallelujahs that are thrown into the opposite scale? And a being so weak, so vain, so heartlessly selfish, so utterly

* See letter from a Lockport correspondent on this subject, given as note B in the Appendix.

dead to the commonest feelings of virtue and common sense, you would have us believe the great parent to be!

I prefer, sir, to be an orphan in the universe, to acknowledge no parent, to depend on myself alone—far, far rather than to imagine for myself *such* a father! What do I say? I *prefer* it? Let me not talk of mere preference. If there be a curse beyond all other curses, it is to believe one's self the offspring of a being who thus outrages every generous feeling, and tramples on every parental responsibility. If any duty be sacred, it is that of a parent to give, to the utmost extent of his ability, happiness to his child. And shall a desire to display "his holiness in the punishment of sin and his mercy in its pardon" absolve him from this bounden duty? The dumb brutes are less selfish than this; the very sheep will turn to defend her lamb from the dog, and sacrifice, not an idle ambition, but her life, to save her offspring. If a great, omnipotent parent gave us existence, his first, his most sacred duty is, to make the existence he gave a happy one. No being can divest himself of a responsibility thus voluntarily assumed, or atone for a breach of duty by a love of praise.

I am no deist, sir, and shall leave the deist to resolve, as he may, Epicurus' dilemma. The only God I ever could imagine, since I came to years of discretion, was one of limited power. If such there be, he has kept me in ignorance of his existence and attributes, and I am content so to remain. You may call me infidel, atheist, or what you please.

I protest, then, against your justification of an omnipotent deity creating, or (which is the same thing in his case) permitting, crime and vice, by way of showing forth his excellence and glory. If men have any idea of virtue at all, they *feel* that selfishness is not virtue; and that any being who first gives birth to sentient creatures, and then consults his own enjoyment—or, still worse, exalts his own fame—at the expense of their happiness, is guilty of the worst, lowest, most degrading species of selfishness. The slave-holding parent, who sells his coloured offspring into a slavery, which, at least, finds a respite in the grave, evinces less of cold brutality than a God such as you portray.

It remains for me briefly to advert to your ten evidences.

First. I have spoken of no compensating process, except that resulting from the growth of minerals, the accumulation of marine productions, and the formation of alluvial strata from decaying vegetation. Are you prepared to deny these facts? I have adopted no "theory." Space permits me not, even were I better qualified for the task, to go into geological details, to weigh the respective claims of the Wernerian and the Huttonian, and I know not how many other learned and ingenious, hypotheses. Are *you* prepared to adopt a theory of the earth? to tell us how high the Alps and Andes were six thousand years ago, and how "small the waste" which their granite peaks have suffered? or to admit or to rebut the conjecture, that those very peaks may have been protruded to their present elevation by

internal convulsions or volcanic agency? * What shadow of proof, then, can you adduce, that they "cannot, for a very great period, have been exposed to the ravages of time?"

Every tyro in geology could refute the position that primitive rocks are formed after the manner of coral reefs; and you surely could not so misconstrue my words as to give them that interpretation. I but adduced these more striking examples of mineral growth in proof, that, if there was loss on one part, there was gain on another. Suppose that the extreme peaks of primitive mountains should, after the lapse, perhaps, of millions of years, wear down till they rose not above the strata of secondary formation, the regular growth of which is ascertained and acknowledged—what then? Cannot we suppose an age of the world in which mountain peaks were naked granite, and another in which they should be covered with limestone? And does such a natural revolution as this furnish even an apology for a proof against the world's eternity?

Second. Third. I doubt not, I never doubted, that the earth's population is greater now than it was four thousand years ago, and that its inhabitants are wiser now than they were then. But what of this? What right have we to assume the same ratio of population and improvement, or any regular ratio whatever, for the still more remote ages of barbarism and bloodshed? Bacon's excellent recommendation, not to forsake inductive logic for random conjecture, forbids.

We shall grievously err, too, if from the progress of improvement *after* writing, and more especially printing, was invented, we reason upon what may have been its progress *before* that period. There is no analogy between the cases. Formerly, inventions, improvements, correct ideas, may have shone forth and astonished the world, meteor-like, for a brief season, then to die away and be forgotten. Now, signs give immortality to sounds, and every valuable idea may be rendered, through the medium of the press, co-enduring with the world.

But again, I have nowhere assumed the hypothesis, that man and the other animal races have existed, under the same form as they now exist, eternally.

Fifth. Still more strangely do you violate every rule of logic in arguing, that because we do not happen to be acquainted with the facts of the past eternity of the earth, there has been no such past eternity. This is excellent proof of our limited knowledge, but no proof at all of the world's limited duration.

* You may probably recollect, that the Huttonians adduce, in defence of this hypothesis of theirs, the sudden throwing up of a hill in the Bay of Naples, which (if we may believe the account published by Sir William Hamilton in the "Philosophical Transactions for 1771") was raised one thousand feet in a single night; as also the sudden appearance of a new island at the Azores, recorded in the "Philosophical Transactions for 1812;" together with other phenomena of a similar character. I mention this incidentally, and not because I am prepared to adopt any such theory.

Sixth. If there be one single so-called science on which the evidences are neither "tangible" nor "easy of apprehension," that pseudo-science is theology. I adhere to my former argument, then, that if we are to believe in the infallibility of the "common consent of mankind" in such a case as this, there is an end to all improvement.

Seventh. You are right in reminding me, that, as you employed a simile only, it did not behove you to prove that man is a literal stream and God a literal fountain. We see intelligent beings reproduced from intelligent beings. Here is no fountain lower than its source. But if living creatures did actually spring, every day, from the dust of the ground, who shall prove by an idle simile that the cause was inadequate to the effect? *Because water cannot run up hill*, is that a reason why life cannot spring from inanimate matter? If this be the poetry of logic, sir, it is assuredly nothing more.

We know that life *does* often spring from inanimate matter. The experiment, for instance, has been tried and recorded of cutting out a part of the interior of a sound potatoe; it was then macerated, and put into a glass tube with water, which water had been previously distilled, to prevent the possibility of its containing the germ of future life; the tube was then hermetically sealed under the blowpipe, to exclude all action of the atmosphere: and, in twenty-four hours, the potatoe was alive with animated beings, whose limbs, shape, and motions could be clearly distinguished under the solar microscope. What simile can disprove a fact like this?

Eighth. I shall be glad to hear the instances you promise to furnish.

Ninth. Your *experience* argument proves a little too much. Mahometans, Hindoos, Fire-Worshippers, and all other religionists, know, or say they know, their Gods by experience, as well as the Christian. If such experience, then, is to be admitted as proof, we shall have not only the orthodox creator, but Allah, Bramah, Fo, and a whole host of other deities, to be installed at once. Allow me, therefore, still to doubt, when my neighbour tells me he feels God, or Allah, or any other spirit, how much of the feeling is imagination, and how much reality.

Unable as I am even to conceive an earth's creator infinite in goodness and power, and impossible as I feel it to personify either one or a thousand supernatural beings, to enter with you on a discussion of the divine unity or plurality—a discussion to which human language seems to me impertinent—would be to waste my own and our readers' time. Into regions like these let those venture who are acquainted with them.

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

LETTER IX.

New-York, May 14, 1831.

SIR,

That must be an obtuse moral sensibility indeed, which considers it allowable for a man, from interested motives, to refrain from endeavouring to promote what he deems to be the cause of truth. And the bold justification of this principle by a sceptic leader, so far from recommending his cause, will operate decidedly to its disadvantage; for mankind in general look upon temporisers and dissimulators, not only as void of principle, but as acting a part unworthy of high and honourable minds. In noticing this case, however, it is not my object to make "accusations" against sceptics. Were *that* my object, I should not stop to consider so *comparative* a trifle as this.

My assertion, that the editor of "Priestcraft Exposed" had renounced infidelity, appears to have been a small mistake, though not of my own making. It would seem that it was not the *editor*, but the *printer*, of that work. And what is the mighty difference, so far as the fact of the conversion of an infidel is concerned? It is not denied that that printer was an infidel. But, to place the subject beyond all further evasion, I here expressly declare that there was a time when I was myself an infidel; yet I am now exerting myself in the defence of Christianity, not however from interested motives, but from a full persuasion of its truth. And, sir, I can produce numerous other individuals of veracity, who are ready, in their own names, to make the same statement in relation to themselves. Is *this* enough?

I am perfectly willing to leave the question of cause and effect to the good sense of the community, without further argument—perfectly willing to leave it with that community to say, if an effect does not prove a cause, even if we do not *see* that cause;—yea, and if an *intelligent* effect does not prove an *intelligent cause*. For my opponent to denominate this argumentative appeal "assertion," seems hardly the way to meet it.

Optimism teaches that murder will work for the good of the murderer, &c., and that *all* evil is *productive* of good. I believe that murder will operate to the detriment of the murderer, and that *some* evil is *not* productive of good, but is itself *produced* as an inseparable consequent of good, whose existence is on the whole a greater good, than would be the *non-existence* of the evil, and the consequent non-existence of that inseparable good. Is this "a distinction without a difference?" Is there no difference between making murder operate for the *good* of the murderer, and making it operate to his *harm*?

Ere God created at all, himself must have been the great end and object of his operations; for he could have been under no obligation to non-entities. These would not have been the losers, had they never existed; for non-entities can realize neither existence nor the lack of existence. God was therefore under no obligation to them whatever, to bring them into being; under no obligation to them whatever, to create them for their own sake. As he was the only being in the universe, his of course was the only interest to be consulted, in relation to their creation or non-creation. It would be unreasonable indeed to suppose, that, when it was at his option to create them or not, he must relinquish to them any of his rights in case he *were* to create them; for, all those rights he could retain, merely by *forbearing* to create. His great object, then, in creating, must have been his own glory, consist that glory in what it might; which glory he regards, and requires others to regard, not with a feeling of selfishness, not with a feeling of pride and ambition, but because it *ought* to be regarded. He respects, and requires others to respect, the excellency of his own character, *because* it is excellent, and because excellency, be it where it may, *ought* to be respected. He regards himself, and requires others to regard him, not to gratify a "paltry hankering after incense," or "a grovelling passion for flattery," or "an idle ambition," but because it would be wrong in him to disregard, or not to require others to regard, moral excellence, like himself. He regards his own glory chiefly, and requires others so to regard it, because he is the first, the most glorious of beings, whose glory *ought* to be chiefly regarded. If, then, that glory could be promoted by the creation of rational intelligences, (and that it could be, there are a thousand considerations to show,) he not only had the right, but was under the moral obligation, to create those intelligences. But I deny, that he is under any obligation to *prevent* those whom he creates, rational beings as they are, from sinning, be the consequence to them what it may. God's glory requires their existence as rational, responsible, free agents. Being rational, they know better than to sin. Being free, they are under no obligation to sin. And must the divine glory, the divine supremacy, be sacrificed, by the non-creation of free agents, because, if created, they would needlessly choose to sin! Must the self-existent, the supreme, be thus subjected to the caprice of man! Never! no, never! It needs not be said, that he could create them thus, and yet prevent their sinning. It is not to be assumed, that he, in *his* sphere, could *wisely* prevent any sin which he does not prevent, what sin soever man, in a *different* sphere can wisely prevent. Besides, it is a self-contradiction to say, that he could give them that degree of rational, moral freedom and responsibility which would render them absolutely *liable* to fall into sin, and yet *ensure* that they should *not* fall. And such a *liability* may be necessary to the existence of the highest degree of virtue,

necessary to the good of the universe, and necessary to the glory of God. It needs not be said, that he is under obligation to act in relation to them, as an *earthly* parent should act in relation to *his* children. He stands not in the attitude of an earthly parent. He has moral rights and moral claims which no such parent can have. He is the *infinite and supreme creator*. He has the moral government of the universe on his shoulders. He moves in a sphere far other than man. No *man's* glory should be the chief object; wherefore, a human parent is to make his child's happiness paramount. But to say that *God* must make *man's* happiness thus, though it clash with the interests of the whole universe, and even with his own glory, is to make man a more important being than the deity himself. I consider *holiness* to be of higher importance even than *happiness*; and likewise, that the great being who sustains the universe, is of infinitely greater consequence than the *whole* of that universe which he sustains, and which, with inexpressible ease, he could remand back to non-existence. God and man act in *very* different spheres; and circumstances alter cases. Some things which would be proper under one set of circumstances, would be altogether improper under different ones. Man acts within a very limited sphere, and for very limited interests. To the promotion of those interests he can exclusively devote himself, leaving other interests without his sphere to the care of others. Suppose now his sphere to be enlarged, he would have additional interests to promote, and would therefore have so to adjust and balance those interests, as to prevent their clashing, or the gaining of an undue advantage by one over another. Thus would he be no longer under circumstances to study the *exclusive* promotion of the interests first committed to him, or to act in relation to them just as he did before. Now God has the countless concerns and interests of the whole universe to adjust and balance, all of which relate to and bear upon one another. He has the *general good* to consult, not the *mere* and *exclusive happiness of ungodly men*. And he has likewise his own glory to maintain. Under all these circumstances, it must be obvious, that it would be altogether improper for him to act in relation to any individual, just as if he were the only object relative to which he had to act. He has indeed, even under the circumstances in which he is now placed, no right to do any one injustice; but 'tis doing *no* injustice to men to punish them for doing wrong, or to forbear to *prevent* their doing wrong. And, within the bounds of justice, God has a right to confer upon any individual as much or as little holiness and happiness, as the general good or his own glory may require. Had he the family but of one man for which to act; had he not his infinite glory to maintain; in fine, where he precisely in the sphere of an earthly parent; it is easy to perceive, that he could *consistently* do very differently from what he now can, in relation to that particular family. We see,

then, that it is not the first duty of God to make his creatures happy, and that he cannot consistently bestow unmingled happiness on all his creatures, although he has the *physical power* so to do. His first object, as it ought to be, is his own glory; which is ever to form the chief item of that *great whole* of which we speak when we use the phrase, "*all things considered.*" Undoubtedly, the happiness of his creatures, so far as can consist with the highest wisdom, is for his glory; but no further. Their abstract happiness would by no means redound to this; for such happiness would have to be conferred at the expense of every thing else. Wherefore, the happiness of man could never have been the *prime* object of his creation. It does not therefore detract from the wisdom, power, or goodness of God, that sin and misery are in the world. But it *does* detract from his *power*, yea, it makes him inferior to man, to say that he *cannot* prevent sin and misery. *Cannot*, and *cannot consistently*, are very different expressions. God *can* do any thing which man can do, besides doing what man cannot do. He can not only prevent all the sin which man can, but all the rest besides. But he cannot *consistently* do this. As the moral governor of the universe, he cannot *consistently* act in man's limited, abstract sphere, regardless of the great whole. An *infinite* being, then, is the only one worthy of the name God; but the limited God of Plato, so powerful as to produce all the good existing throughout the universe, and at the same time so weak as to be unable to prevent a flea-bite; so powerful as to move all matter, and yet so weak as to be unable to subdue a powerless, motionless, lifeless clod—marvellously *refractory* by the way—is a compound of contradictions and absurdities exceeded only by that of nothingarianism, which neither believes nor disbelieves in this same Platonic foolery—and by the reckless infatuation that is "willing to remain" in this nothingarian state, regardless of God, and indifferent to interests momentous as eternity.

A few words now on my ten evidences. And

First. *The present appearance of the earth.* I, sir, am "prepared to adopt a theory of the earth;" which theory is not the Wernerian or the Huttonian one, neither of which is *truly* "learned," but altogether visionary, being founded on imagination, instead of inductive science; but it is this: that the granite peaks of mountains, void as they are of all organic mixture, are thus shown to be primitive formations, and not secondary ones; that, as some of those mountains have no strata of submarine formation, they must have been original elevations, and not upheaved by volcanic agency from the bottom of an ocean teeming with animal life; that their peaks or summits are continually wearing away; that, as *granite* does not *grow*, this waste is not replenished by any compensating process; and that, as those peaks, notwithstanding their continual waste, still tower aloft, but slightly affected in their well-

proportioned, spiral forms, they cannot long have been the subjects of dilapidation.

Second. *The population of the earth.* "Bloodshed, barbarism," and all the various means of depopulation, have prevailed during the last four thousand years, and yet the human race have been on the *increase*. Now, it is neither *logical* nor *analogical*, to suppose that *similar causes* before that period would have produced *dissimilar effects*, and occasioned the race to *decrease*. This is a plain violation of the Baconian and Newtonian rule of inductive logic; though not half so gross a one as is what my opponent says in relation to the non-existence of men and animals *under their present form* from eternity. What cause does he know to be operative, or to have ever been operative, capable of producing any *radical change* in the *form* of man or beast? This idea is a most outrageous violation of the inductive rule above mentioned. But suppose a change in *form* to have taken place, how would this affect the *increase*?

Third. *Knowledge and improvement.* Suppose the ratio of improvement, and the progress of knowledge, prior to the invention of writing, to have been less than they now are, still there was *some* advancement; for the nature of the human mind is progressive. Not far back, then, would it be necessary to go, to find the point of utter human ignorance.

Fourth. *History and tradition.* These both *positively* show the world to have been in its infancy a few thousand years ago. As this evidence was not considered in the last reply to me, I shall expect it to be noticed in the next.

Fifth. *The LACK of any memorial of the world's eternity.* Some great names and great events, of an existence antecedent to the invention of letters, have been transmitted down to us, and will descend to the latest posterity. But what are the great names and events of a prior eternity?

Sixth. *The common consent of mankind.* The *earth* most assuredly is tangible. We can feel and see the operations of nature, just as we can those of art. It is only, therefore, for men to form their opinion, whether these tangible, natural appearances exhibit manifestations of mind. And on this subject, so entirely accessible to the smallest capacity of the most unlettered barbarian or savage, the common sense of mankind, both of the enlightened and unenlightened, has decided in our favour; which decision, in *such* a case, may be considered the voice of nature, and therefore of truth.

Seventh. *The stream and its fountain.* Intelligent beings are *not* produced by one another. As well say that a *planter* causes a crop to *grow*, as to say that men *produce* intelligent beings. They are no more the cause in the one case than in the other. They fashion not a limb, they mould not a feature, they impart not vitality, they create not a faculty. How absurd then to talk of *their producing intelligent beings*! But if *they* do not produce them, then they must be produced by an *unintelli-*

gent cause, or by a God. But non-intelligence can never impart intelligence; therefore there must be a God. The case of the production of animal existence in distilled water, &c., as adduced by my opponent in his last, will not overthrow this position, unless he can prove that there can be no germs of sensitive existence introduced into a growing potatoe, or that the distilling of water destroys such germs actually existing in water in its natural state, or that the "blow-pipe" destroys the same existing in the atmosphere with which it comes into contact, or that there is no God to give existence, independent of second causes.

Eighth. *Divine providence.* In my last I promised to give some instances of what I deem to be special providence, which I will now do.

The celebrated William Tennant once took much pains to prepare a sermon to convince a distinguished infidel of the error of his sentiments. But, in attempting to deliver it, he became so confused, that he was obliged to stop, and close the service by a prayer. This unexpected failure on the part of one who had so often astonished the infidel with the power of his eloquence, led the latter to reflect that Mr. Tennant must, at other times, have been aided by a divine power; which reflection resulted in his conversion.

The French fleet under the Duke D'Anville, consisting of forty vessels of war, destined for the destruction of New England, in 1746, was entirely destroyed by a tempest on the night succeeding a general fast throughout that part of the country.

A certain clergyman, in one of his sermons, spake of the man in the camp of Israel, who was stoned to death for gathering sticks on the Sabbath. A man present, to show his contempt, left the house, and began to gather up sticks. When the assembly broke up they found the man dead, with a bundle of sticks in his arms.

Some dozen or fifteen years ago, there was in this city an infidel society, whose test of merit consisted in transcendent blasphemy; and he who could excel in this fearful qualification was entitled to the presidential chair. On a certain occasion, one of their number, a hoary-headed old sinner, had exceeded the rest, and was conducted to his dear-earned seat of distinction; and, as his companions in guilt were on the point of placing on his head the coronal of impiety, he fell lifeless on the floor! The society, astounded at the event, disbanded, and the author of this anecdote, himself a member and an eye-witness, renounced infidelity, and embraced Christianity.

I could, were it at all necessary, give numerous additional instances of a similar kind. To believe that such occurrences are chance events, appears to me to require greater credulity than to believe they are special providences. With regard to *general* providence, it may be discerned in events innumerable, and in the very constitution of things. *Misery* is connected with sin, disgrace

with meanness, national punishment with national transgression, &c., &c., &c. So obvious is this, that even a Jefferson, when reflecting on slavery, could exclaim : " I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just."

Ninth. *Experience.* I am not aware, sir, that Mahometans, Hindoos, &c., pretend to know their God by *experience*. But suppose they do, it does not follow that *nobody* is to be believed, because *some* make false pretensions. My opponent tells me he knows not God. I believe him in this assertion, notwithstanding some of the rest of the human race utter falsehood. In my turn I solemnly declare to him that *I know there is a God*. Will he *believe me*?

Tenth. *Revelation.* We shall shortly have an opportunity to enter into the merits of this evidence of the divine existence.

The course pursued by my opponent in relation to my argument on the subject of the divine unity, though a very *easy* method of carrying on a discussion, is calculated to shed but very little light on a subject, and is any thing rather than "Free Inquiry."

ORIGEN BACHELER.

TO ORIGEN BACHELER.

LETTER IX.

May 21, 1831.

I have said—and I adhere to the sentiment—that I hold that man excused, who, that he may procure bread for his wife and children, shrinks from publicly incurring, as a few pioneers have incurred, the ill-will of a world that has not yet learnt to respect heterodox honesty. Shall he who expresses such a sentiment pass for one who has an "obtuse moral sensibility?" So let me pass, then, with you.

I marvel, sir, at the tone you assume. It is one which I (under similar circumstances,) would never permit to myself. If sceptics persecuted Christians, and that Christians kept silence, not on their heads but on ours would I charge the blame. At our door, who rewarded sincerity with abuse, should I deem the sin of their silence to lie. I should feel that it ill became those who outlawed, instead of honouring candour, to complain that candour was so rarely to be found. I should feel that it behoved us first to appreciate openness, before we ventured to demand it.

Yet would I not be misunderstood. I honour moral courage as one of the first of virtues, and it has ever been my endeavour

to cultivate it in myself. Nor do I believe that (so boldness be but tempered with courtesy,) there is, in this country, nearly so much to be risked or lost, by an undisguised avowal of heresy, as the fears of dissenters from the established faith may oftentimes imagine. Steady, prudent, disinterested, moral conduct will commonly outweigh, in the long run, the most heterodox reputation; and if all who cannot say Shibboleth to the fashionable creed would stand forth and speak prudently but fearlessly, we should soon put an end to the persecution of public opinion, as our ancestors did to that of the rack and stake. While, therefore, I *urge* no one who depends for the actual support of his family, to an open avowal of heresy, I would *encourage* all never to weigh riches or a good name against the benefits which the honest expression of opinion may produce for our race.

I have not denied that cases may be found where the sceptical, but especially the careless, become religious. Our early impressions are so strong, and often recur with so much force! Besides, a man may be a sort of sceptic from thoughtlessness as much as from conviction. That any man *who has once thoroughly examined the evidences of theology*, and then deliberately adopted the opinion that it is an imaginary science, has ever, except under the influence of disease, renounced that opinion, permit me to doubt. But suppose that all the boasted cases of conversion truly had some better foundation than that of the Lockport editor,* are they as one to ten—nay, as one to a hundred, to the converts to scepticism? What thousands did not Paine convert? What tens of thousands have not surrendered their religion to the searching wit of Voltaire? The progress of orthodoxy is ostentatiously announced; the progress of heterodoxy is rapid but silent. A conversion to Christianity is trumpeted all over Christendom; a conversion to scepticism is hardly whispered to one's next door neighbour.

And now, sir, for your most strange argument in defence of a God, who, you say, seeks, first and chief, his own glory.

God, you tell us, could be under no obligation to non-entities; consequently under no obligation to place the beings he might create so as to be either good or happy. Of his own free will he created; consequently he could not be expected to relinquish any of his rights for them. A liability to sin, involving the necessity of vice and crime, *may* be necessary to the greatest degree of virtue, and *is* necessary for the glory of God. Holiness is more important than happiness; holiness is promoted by God's glorification; it is better, then, that God should be glorified by vice and misery, than that man should be blessed with

* I learn by the postscript to the letter published from a Lockport correspondent (which postscript I withheld, from a desire not unnecessarily to allude to personal character,) that the printer of "Priestcraft Exposed" had no fixed opinion of any kind. But as my opponent says this is immaterial, his own experience suffices in proof that such a change as that he speaks of is possible.

virtue and happiness. Perhaps, too, man could not be made happy without his happiness clashing with other interests. In that case, God, having a right to give as much or as little happiness as he chose, acted wisely in creating vice and suffering; for it is *not* the first duty of God to make his children happy. These are your arguments.

Surely no set of theologians, barbarous or civilized, ancient or modern, ever conceived a being more coldly selfish, more calculatingly heartless, or more childishly imbecile, than this! There is excuse for personifying the gentle and untiring love of a mother, the disinterested and wakeful care of a father, the self-forgetting affection with which an enlightened parent watches over the young creatures to whom he has imparted existence, smooths before them the path of life, sedulously removes far off its temptations and its follies, stirs up within them the mild flame of generous virtue, and thus prepares for them a peaceful and a glad existence—there is excuse for personifying under the form of a great parent, feelings so amiable as these, and calling that universal paternal spirit, God. But what shall we say of the imagination (unredeemed by aught of moral beauty,) that conjures forth a being who sits down to consider, before he gives existence to his human offspring, how much of happiness he is “*under obligation*” to confer on what are still non-entities, but what will soon be sentient creatures? who decides, that as he creates them of his own free-will, he “*cannot be expected*” to relinquish his rights to benefit them, or forget his glory to think of their happiness? Obligation! cannot be expected! One seems to listen to the excuses of a soulless miser, whom justice bids to pay a dollar, while the law excuses the payment! And these are to be the reasonings, this the feeling, this the paternal affection, of him whose goodness is ineffable, and whose tender mercies are over all his other works! He is not generously to rejoice in the sinless virtue and unchequered enjoyment he can give, but heartlessly to calculate how much of good and of happiness he may be excused for withholding from his children! If such, sir, be your God, if within his eternal nature there spring no fountain of love such as wells even in the human breast, and gives the lie, even there, to the sordid calculations of unfeeling selfishness—far plainer and honester were it to declare that God holds in his hands the power (and is resolved to use it,) to make us miserable, and then to ask us whither we dare to appeal from the cruelty of the all-powerful.

But a liability to sin, says the ingenious apologist of deity, may be necessary to the highest degree of virtue. What becomes, then, of the goodness of God? Would his virtue be increased by such liability? Or, to speak of earthly realities, would my opponent forbear (if the power were placed in his hands,) to take from a child of his the liability to vice, *lest thereby its virtue should be lessened?*

But then my opponent thinks vice is necessary to the glory of

God, that he may show forth "his holiness in its punishment and his mercy in its pardon" "If God," says a French writer,* "made man in his own image, full well has man returned the compliment!" And he has selected but sorry specimens of humanity, too, after which to fashion the being he adores. A king may rejoice in iniquity because it affords him the credit of punishing it; a priest may be glad that men trespass, that he may exhibit his mercy in absolving them from their transgressions: but if we are to make a God in the image of man, let us, for decency's sake, choose more respectable models than such kings and priests.

And then the idea of an infinite God being glorified by aught that the insect man can think, or say, or do! If all the caterpillars in America were to sing your praises, and extol your wisdom, not one day in seven, but all the days in the year, would you, (even supposing you to have created them,) be greatly flattered by their senseless adulation? Grant that you were childish enough to constitute your glory the first and chief object of desire, would that glory indeed be exalted by the caterpillar chorus? Yet you will not deny that between you and an infinite God there is an immeasurably greater distance than between the crawling insect and you. The God, therefore, who should conceive his glory to be increased by man's wonder and adoration, would be far more weak and vain than he, the man whose worse than childish hankering after applause should be gratified by the hallelujahs of the earth-worm.

But interests clash in God's kingdom, and man's happiness must be sacrificed. In earthly governments of ignorance and imperfection, interests may clash; as regards the perfect government of heaven, the supposition is absurd.

And all this plain, matter-of-fact argument, which comes home to every one who ever felt what a duty he incurs who imparts sentient existence—all this weight of reasoning, which our moral sense stamps as unanswerable, is to be got over, by a bare, hazarded assertion, that God, though he prefers his glorification to his creatures' happiness, yet regards it, "not with a feeling of selfishness, not with a feeling of pride and ambition, but as it ought to be regarded." I pray you, sir, what is this assertion worth? Is a preference of self-exaltation to the happiness of others to become a virtue at your fiat? Is a love of glory to be disconnected from pride and ambition, because you declare it so? What apologist for a tyrant but can say—but *has said*—the same? What pander to legitimacy but will tell us, that the anointed of God "regards his own glory as it ought to be regarded," and that "the great man who governs the nation is of infinitely greater consequence than the whole of the nation he governs?"† And here, in truth, may we see the real

* Le Comte de Ségur.

† Your phrase is: "The great Being who sustains the universe is of infinitely greater consequence than the whole of the universe he sustains."

source of this monstrous conception. Men were accustomed to hear the proudest among their earthly monarchs boldly place their glory first, and the nation's welfare afterwards; nay, to hear them declare, with the "grand monarque," "*Le peuple, c'est moi!*"*—and it was natural enough that, when they set about installing a monarch of the skies, they should think to command human fear and homage, by attributing to him also the same reckless and magnificent selfishness.

For the sake of man's tranquillity, if we must have a heavenly king, let it not be one of the old, legitimate, right-divine school, but a sovereign more suited to these modern times of democracy and revolution.

I have but little to add on your ten evidences, having already noticed them in detail.

You have a right to adopt any theory of the earth you please, and I an equal right to dissent from it, unsupported as it is, except by your own assertion.

To the arguments contained in the paragraphs two and three I have already replied.

Fourth. You complain that I have not replied to your assertion, that history and tradition "*positively show* the world to have been in its infancy a few thousand years ago." Truly, sir, I conceived that such an argument needed not one word in refutation. Shall the dreams and imaginations of barbarians three or four thousand years ago, even if we suppose them to have been accurately transmitted to us—shall these dreams and imaginations, which now spoke of the world's creation, and anon of its speedy dissolution, be received as proof—nay you will have it, as *positive* proof—that the earth was in its infancy? Let those trust to such a broken reed who will.

Sixth. There is tangible proof on the earth of its own existence, and of nothing more. But let us assume the very argument in dispute, and admit that there *is* natural proof of a God; is this proof so accessible to the meanest capacity of the most unlettered? Dr. Chalmers and Bishop Watson, whose capacities were not the meanest, contend that there *is* no natural proof, and that we must trust solely to revelation. But what man in his senses denies the evidences of the earth's rotundity? These, then, are far more tangible, *even on the admission of theologians*, than the evidences of the deity's existence. And if the "common consent of mankind" failed until Galileo enlightened it, to decide the astronomical problem, is it strange that it should also have erred in solving the theological one?

Do you ask me whence the belief in supernatural beings could arise, if it be unfounded in truth? The poet's reply, if severe, is true:

* "*The people; that is, myself!*" The expression, as recorded of Louis XIV. of France, is well known.

"See from the rending earth and bursting skies,
 Fierce gods descend, and fiends infernal rise;
 Here fixed the dreadful, there the blessed abodes;
 Fear made her devils, and weak hope her gods;
 Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,
 Whose attributes were rage, revenge, or lust;
 Such as the souls of cowards might conceive,
 And, formed like tyrants, tyrants might believe!"

Seventh. A father and mother do *not* produce their child? Then, sir, no one thing throughout the universe produces another. Then the spider, when she spins from her own body the silken meshes of her web, does not produce that web, nor the silkworm her yellow cocoon. Then the sun is not the cause of heat, nor the north wind of cold, nor virtue of happiness, nor vice of misery. Then, in fact, cause and effect are words utterly devoid of meaning, except in the one only sentence: "God is a cause, and the universe an effect." You assume the hypothesis, that nothing is produced except by a God, in order to prove that God's existence!

Eighth. This argument is utterly unworthy of one who possesses your ingenuity and resources. Suppose every one of the instances which you adduce (without giving a single authority) to be strictly and literally true,* what shadow of an argument do they furnish of divine interposition? A clergyman is put out during his sermon, and his confusion converts one of his audience: rather odd, I admit; but I should not thence argue that God confused his servant on purpose. The New Englanders fast and pray, and the French fleet is destroyed: and how many hundreds of fasts are never answered at all? is it so *very* marvellous that one time in a thousand the thing should fit? A few bacchanalians perhaps (for if there be any truth at all in the story, I should judge the society to have been of *bon vivans*, not of *infidels*; it is intoxication, not scepticism, that produces puerile blasphemy:)—a few dissolute boon companions curse and swear over their cups, and one of them (struck perchance with that apoplexy which so often rewards the worship of the bottle,) drops down dead: the marvel is, that such things are not heard of every day. As to the certain clergyman and the poor man gathering sticks, I should like much to be furnished with the names, dates, and localities, and to know whether the poor wretch was not frozen to death in endeavouring to

* I think it right to state, that though I have made the strictest inquiry, I cannot find a single man in this city who pretends to any knowledge of the "infidel society" of which you speak. Dr. Rogers, to whom you referred me as your authority, told me he had heard it as a report, and could say nothing as to its truth or falsehood. The oldest liberals in New York never even heard a whisper of its existence: and—the strongest presumptive evidence of all—the tract makers of our good city never stumbled upon this signal "judgment of providence," which would have served for so striking an illustration to some of their favourite arguments. Could name, place, or date, be given, we might possibly find out the truth, but not one of these are you able to furnish.

pick up a scanty supply of winter fuel: I have followed my usual occupations on Sunday for the last ten or fifteen years, and it does not seem to me very likely or very just, that I should be spared so long, and the stick-gatherer struck dead for a single offence.*

I have not a word to say in reply to my opponent's "experience." Let him permit me, in return, to give mine. I was brought up by a kind and strictly religious mother, in the very lap of orthodoxy. Slowly, and with a painful effort, did I first venture to doubt the infallibility of the doctrines she taught me. Again and again did I examine the evidences in defence of that religion which all my early associations bid me desire to find sacred. In vain. The more I saw and read and reflected, the more thoroughly convinced I became, that nature, so eloquent in every lesson that regards the welfare of man, is silent regarding the doings, the attributes, nay, the existence of a God.

It is many years since my opinions have given me, even for a moment, anxiety or uneasiness. And I am bold to say, that no one can attain to the serenity and contentment of mind, and to the unshackled freedom of spirit which these opinions produce, without saying, with me, that if it were possible to exchange them again for orthodoxy, the wealth of the Indies would poorly compensate the exchange.

Am I not warranted, then, in endeavouring to obtain for others the same freedom from ghostly dreams and disquieting imaginations which I have thus gained for myself?

I feel that I am. In probing the foundations of the orthodox faith, and in unsettling (as in the case of some I may perchance have done) the belief of years, I fear not the consequences to our readers' peace of mind. If the history of my own feelings is to be admitted in proof, they will be, not wiser only, but happier also, without their superstitions.

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

* How do you interpret the following paragraph, which I cut from a number of the (London) Atlas, received by the last arrivals? Is prayer as well as stick-gathering on the first day of the week offensive to the deity?

Dying in prayer.—At Nottingham, an inquest was held on the body of Anne White. She had been in the methodist chapel on Sunday, joined fervently in prayer, and remained during the prayer meeting. She was questioned as to the state of her mind, and answered satisfactorily. Miss Butler, of Carlton-farm, prayed aloud, and the deceased knelt down with others. During the prayer she was observed to sink, as if kneeling lower, and at length the body became collapsed, and attracted attention. She was raised and found to be quite dead. She left a husband and seven children. Verdict, "Died by the visitation of God."

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

LETTER X.

New-York, May 28, 1831.

SIR,

I perceive it is admitted, that moral courage is one of the first of virtues. One would hardly expect, after hearing such an admission, to find the individual making it excusing his adherents from the exercise of this virtue. But why should the man who excuses its deficiency in others, value it so highly in himself? A thing so easily cast aside cannot be of much value; and it would therefore be well worth the consideration of sceptics, whether, to avoid prejudice, and to run no risk of injuring society and ruining souls, it would not be better for them *all* to desist from its promulgation. But if it is indeed so honourable, and so worthy of being cherished, a lack thereof must be less honourable, and a moral delinquency. Besides, if men are to be excused from its exercise till things be favourable, and the world approve, most assuredly they will exercise it never; for what moral *courage* can there be, in acting in *accordance* with the opinion of mankind? So then, sceptics are to be excused from exercising that honourable, first-rate virtue, moral courage, till the world shall have become so favourable, that there will be no opportunity to exercise it! Well, then, my opponent is performing a very gratuitous task, altogether uncalled for, by the exercise of his. He may as well wait, and be excused. Who owes him any consideration for the exercise of a quality so innocently and harmlessly dispensed with?

"If sceptics persecuted Christians." Sir, they *do* persecute Christians. They are continually slandering, reviling, and abusing them, uttering against them all manner of hard speeches. Still, the consciences of Christians do not sit so loosely upon them, as to permit them to keep silence in relation to Christianity. No, sir; the tone of *Christian* sentiment is higher than this. It fixes the price of truth higher than a little temporary business. It makes it of too much importance to be dispensed with for *any consideration whatever*. It permits not its votaries to hide their heads for fear of danger. It makes them heroes; it makes them martyrs; it calls them to die, rather than abandon it. How contemptible, how mean, is the compromising, temporising sentiment advanced above, compared with this! But it seems, after all, that there is not so much to be risked as sceptics have supposed, by an avowal of their sentiments. O no. Christians then are not such persecutors as they have been wont to imagine them to be; and so these *moral heroes* have been deterred from *honesty* by a *bugaboo* of their own fancy.

No doubt the world will soon be disenthralled from the manacles of *priestcraft* by *such* moral giants—which by the way cannot be so very bad, if it is not sufficiently so to have men “urged” to exertion against it. But what wonderful ideas of the nature of moral obligation must my opponent have, to suppose a man released from the discharge of duty on account of opposition! Were there no other *reformers* than these sceptics, it would be some time ere the abominations and cruelties practised in the heathen world would be brought to a termination.

I do not *believe*, sir, “that any man *who has once thoroughly examined the evidences of theology*,” ever *has* adopted the opinion that “it is an imaginary science.” The most noted infidels have been noted likewise for their superficiality on this subject. Hume owned he never read the New Testament with attention. Gibbon appears never to have perused any able defence of Christianity. Voltaire had but a superficial knowledge of religious subjects. Paine quoted the Bible from recollection, and made many egregious blunders. So much for these *thorough examiners*. But many who have embraced infidelity for want of thorough examination, have, on making such examination, renounced it—not however “under the influence of disease,” but under that of conviction. And, with regard to the converts made to infidelity by the ribaldry of Paine, and the wit of Voltaire, superficial indeed must the minds of such individuals be, to be caught by the trash which served even their authors but so poorly in the dying hour. No doubt if the truth were known, many of those converts who pass under the name of sceptics, would, like the printer of “*Priestcraft Exposed*,” be found to have “no fixed opinions of any kind.” And this was the substance of my *original* proposition respecting sceptics, viz., that many of them, on renouncing scepticism, confess that they never were sceptics in reality. But why this forced, this half-suppressed admission, that the conversion of sceptics is *possible*, when it is so common a case, and when Christianity rose from so small a beginning, and now embraces so large a portion of mankind? A few words now relative to the divine glory.

I said, sir, that God could have been under no obligation to non-entities with regard to their *creation* or *non-creation*. I said, that a *liability* to fall into sin prevents *insurance* against it, and that such a liability in man is necessary; for, that God’s glory is promoted by the exercise of his mercy in the remission of sin, and of his justice in its punishment; and consequently, that the divine glory in perfection could never have been realized, had sin never existed. I said, that, as God is the principal being in the universe, his glory is, of right and *obligation*, first and chiefly to be consulted, always barring injustice to his creatures, which would itself be derogatory thereto. I admitted that it would be for the glory of God to make his creatures as happy

ould, consistently with the interests of the great whole, further. But I did not represent him, miser-like, as calculating how *small* an amount of happiness he was under obligation to confer upon them. This could never have been a bargain with him for its own sake—nor even at all, save when and more important interests required. And the very fact that God regards *chiefly* the *chief* interests of the universe, and *minor* interests *subservient* thereto, within the limits of, thereby promoting the greatest possible amount of good, is the strongest evidence conceivable of his infinite goodness; and his consulting the *abstract minor* interests under consideration, would prove him a being infinitely *less* benevolent. It is easily demonstrated, as I conceive, that, in a universe composed in part of rational, responsible, free agents, there would be no such thing as promoting the greatest possible amount of good, if it were not for the fact that God could consistently regulate *such* a universe just as he could one merely physical. I showed that the homage which his creatures owe him is not required from selfishness, but that it *ought* to be rendered; just as a parent requires a child to serve towards him a certain degree of deference. And that it is no more honour to a superior, and consequently, a man as compared with a caterpillar, to need argument, the “caterpillar” comparison notwithstanding; for *rational* and *irrational* beings are very different things. Yet, were caterpillars endued with reason, capable of appreciating the glories of an all-wise creator, and were I myself that creator, I now think under such circumstances, I should not merely *desire*, but feel under a moral obligation to *require*, them to honour and adore me, because, things being thus circumstanced, they *ought* so to do, not because of any puerile “hankering” for applause on my part, or of my having capriciously constituted my own the greatest object, that glory being so constituted by the nature and fitness of things. But a strange reason indeed would it be, why an *earthly* monarch, himself but a man, should be more anxious for his glory of greater consequence than a nation of *just such* men as himself. Were he, like God, intrinsically and infinitely more than they, these cases would be parallel; but they are not. And as to a God varying in character with the creature he would be no God at all, but a mere *subject* of man’s will. But why this *reluctance* in relation to the divine existence on the part of my opponent? Why this mode of expression, “If we *must* have a heavenly king?” Is he then in very *unwilling* to have one? With regard to virtue in God and there is no arguing from the one case to the other. There is no comparison between finite and infinite. The divine being, being infinitely superior to all other beings, cannot be tempted of them. He could be tempted, and should he resist the temptation, he would not in strictness of speech be said to be more excellent than he now is, inasmuch as he is already infinitely excellent, and there can be no excellency greater than infinite; although

indeed he might perhaps be said in such a case to *promote* more excellence. But man's excellency or virtue, being is susceptible of increase. And it is in accordance with common acceptation of language, and indeed with philosophy, to say in relation to him, that the greater the temptation he resists, the greater his virtue. But well indeed might a parent withdraw such temptation from a child, uncertain must be whether that child would have sufficient virtue to resist it, and having, as he would, its abstract interests to pursue instead of the interests of a universe. Nor can it with propriety be said, that, because God is *omnipotent*, he can promote the highest interest of every individual, just as a parent can that of a child; for the term omnipotence has merely to physical and not to moral power. Neither can it follow, that he could with propriety in *his sphere* exert influence, or remove temptation in any given case, merely because man in *his sphere* could properly do so. And "justice, benevolence, wisdom, mercy, and love," are substantially the same in heaven and earth, and, under similar circumstances are similarly manifested; yet under different circumstances, they are differently manifested. A parent having one child, could study the *exclusive* interests of that one; but a parent having two children, would do very *wrong* to study the interests of but one. Hence we perceive, that what would be right under one set of circumstances, would be wrong under a different set. So far then is the circumstance, that a parent consults the exclusive interests of no one of the innumerable family of man, is consulted, but that the general good is the rather promoted, even at the sacrifice of private interest, an argument greatly in favour of his perfections, and the strongest evidence there conceivable. And here I shall venture to rest the argument relative to the divine glory. Now for my ten evidences.

My *theory of the earth* is supported by demonstration, not by mere assertion. My *population* and *improvement* arguments feel very willing to risk as they are. My *historical* evidences are not to be put aside merely by a random flourish of a sceptic's pen. For an individual, without the shadow of authority, to assert his assertion, to denominate universal history and tradition as dreams and imaginations of barbarians, will never satisfy an inquiring mind. My argument deduced from the *lack of memorial of the world's great antiquity*, I conceive to be supported by demonstration itself. The argument drawn from the *common sense of mankind*, is not to be invalidated by the *theory* of Chalmers, or Watson, or any other individual. It is a *fact*, that this common sense *does* decide in favour of a God, whenever the evidences of his existence are brought into view. But the return to the earth is *not* tangible to common observation, as the operations of nature; wherefore, mankind would be liable to err with regard to the former than the latter argument relative to the *stream and its fountain* remains

shaken. A man may be said to produce a statue, because he *fashions* it; but one might as well call the act of casting seed into the ground, the producing of a crop, as to talk of parents producing children. My proofs touching *divine providence* stand unaffected. No answer is attempted with regard to a *general* providence. And as to the cases by me adduced of *special* providence, whatever *some* sceptics may think of them, they will have weight with *others*, and with mankind in general. They will think it would be more singular that such coincidences should occur by chance, than by divine interposition. But how does my *opponent* undertake to dispose of them? Why, *Tennant's case*, he says, "was rather odd." Yes, odd enough to convince the infidel who witnessed it, and who must have been a more competent judge of that case than he. The *French fleet*, he tells us, happened to be destroyed about the time of a fast, while other fasts are unanswered. Well, it is no sign that God never answers prayer, because he does not always do it. The *heaven-daring stick-gatherer*, he says, was *perhaps* frozen to death in gathering winter fuel! This is disposing of a case with the dash of a pen, in very deed. It is too much, in a grave discussion. But then he thinks God would not have made an example of that individual, seeing that he himself, notwithstanding he is even worse, escapes. Infinite wisdom, however, sees when it is for the best to make examples, and when not to make them. It does not therefore follow, that, because one high-handed sinner is not signally punished, another is not; or that sudden deaths under *such* circumstances are not special judgments, because such deaths happen under other circumstances. The *infidel club* he *supposes* to have been bacchanalians. Now, as there are *some* temperate infidels, and as there is nothing whatever to show that the club in question were intemperate, his supposition is gratuitous. Wherefore, his attributing the death of the infidel president to a drunken fit, cannot be considered a satisfactory disposition of the case. Those who were witnesses of the event, and who were therefore the best judges, seem to have had a very different view of the matter, from the fact that they dispersed, and that several of them abandoned their infidelity. But he complains that I have given no authority for these cases. Well, then, I will give it now. The case of Mr. Tennant may be found in his life; that of the French fleet and the New-England fast in history; that of the stick-gatherer in an American tract; and that of the infidel president, in the testimony of a *member* who was an *eye-witness*. With regard to the latter case, I have proof in my hands that Dr. Rogers declared he had the account from this eye-witness, and not from report. This society was probably as obscure as the *similar ones* which my opponent in a recent debating meeting supposed to exist in the city, and which he, a liberal, knows nothing about. And this may have been the reason why the "tract-makers" in this city never came to the knowledge of this

event, "which would have served for so striking an illustration of" their views of the "signal judgments of providence," and which *does* therefore "strikingly illustrate" mine.—My *experience argument* remains as so much positive knowledge in favour of our side, which a *lack* of experience on the other can never counterbalance. And as to the experience of my opponent, it is nothing *more* than negative. He, it would seem, has *not* experienced that there is a God. But he has not experienced, and he cannot experience that there is *not* a God. How his non-belief in one can have made him a *better* man, it is extremely difficult to conceive. At any rate, such a pretension on his part is very inconsistent with a sentiment frequently advanced by himself and other sceptics, that a man is neither the better nor the worse on account of his opinion.—*Revelation* comes next; and this is my tenth and last evidence of the divine existence, upon the discussion of the authenticity of which, I am now prepared to enter.

Having at length arrived at the termination of the subject which has so long been in debate between us, it would be well briefly to recapitulate the arguments which during the course of it have been advanced, and thus present the reader with a view of the whole subject at one glance.

The leading objection to the existence of an infinite God has been the existence of evil. It has been argued, that a being all-powerful and benevolent, *could* and *would* prevent it; and therefore, that its existence argued either a deficiency of power or goodness in the God that does exist, if indeed any exists at all; of which, however, it has been contended there are no evidences—and likewise that there are no evidences to the contrary. In reply, I have argued, that, in a world formed by infinite wisdom, we finite creatures are to expect to find some things contrary to our limited views of the propriety of things; and, consequently, that the existence of evil, so far from being an objection to the existence of an infinite being, is an evidence in its favour. I have shown that the tokens of gratuitous goodness and almighty power every where displayed, demonstrate that the existence of evil cannot be attributed to a want of those attributes in the deity. I have likewise shown, that it would be the height of absurdity to admit a God, able to carry on the operations of nature, and yet unable to prevent the ills of human life. Hence I have argued, that the permission of evil *must* be attributed to his wisdom. I have further argued that the power and goodness of God, being under the guidance of his wisdom, would of course be so exerted as would *on the whole* be for the best; and that infinite wisdom alone could decide what is so; consequently, that we are not qualified to pronounce any thing whatever, relative to *his* operations, unwise. I have given some reasons to show wherein the wisdom of the permission by him of sin and misery consists. I have shown, that, had sin never existed, the glorious character of God could not have been fully manifested,

liness in its punishment, and his mercy in its remission ; that, if misery had never existed, the good of exemption from it had not have been realized to its full extent, and the necessity to sin would have been wanting. That a God exists, I think, as clearly demonstrated, as that *man* is possessed of power and intelligence. I have on this point contended that we see neither intelligence nor power even in the latter, and the only evidence we have of *his* being possessed thereof, is his external manifestations, and that such manifestations are evidences of the existence of those attributes in him, and they are *infallible* evidences wherever they appear ; but, it is allible, that they prove the existence of those attributes in *us*, wherever those manifestations or indications are to be seen, and that, too, whether we see the cause or not. This I have shown that there are all possible indications of intelligence and power in the works of nature, as exhibited in adaptation, motion, &c., and, therefore, that an intelligent powerful being exists as the cause of those appearances. In answer to all this, it has been remarked, that it would be useless in the deity, to study his own glory at the expense of our happiness ; that, if he could not prevent evil and retain his power, he must be weaker than man, who is daily doing this ; that the evidence we have of cause and effect is uniform precedence and sequence ; and, therefore, that we know not that there is a cause, where we do not perceive this precedence. I have replied, that God does not study his own glory from selfish considerations, but because he is under moral obligation to study an object that ought to be promoted ; that though he has *physical* power to prevent not only all the evil which man does, but all the rest besides, yet, that he is *morally* unable to do so much as that it would not, all things considered, be for the best for *him* in his sphere to do it, whatever might be for the best for *man* in his sphere to do ; that *mere* precedence and sequence do not prove cause and effect, as the precedence and sequence of our letters in this discussion plainly show, but that *now* that *more* than precedence and sequence are concerned in, by the fact that we exert physical force ourselves in producing the effects by us produced—and intelligence in the production of our intelligent effects ; and, therefore, that we know, by reason at all, that there must be a cause, and an intelligent being concerned in the production of the *intelligent effects* dis- tinguishable throughout all nature. In answer, it has been observed, that though the universe exhibits appearances of intelligence and power, we cannot stretch analogy from earth to heaven, and we know nothing about the cause of natural things, whatever we may know of things on the earth. To this I have replied that we are not required thus to stretch analogy, in order to reason on natural things ; that they are here on the earth, and before our eyes ; that they are as fair subjects for investigation touching their cause, as are any artificial works whose

author we do not see; and that the man who will exercise his reason on the subject, must arrive at the conclusion that there is or is not a God; and, therefore, that he who says he knows nothing about it, shows that he will not use his reason, and is of all other men the least entitled to the name of a "Free Inquirer."

The other evidences of the divine existence by me adduced in this discussion, together with the replies to the same by my opponent, are so brief and condensed, that a recapitulation of them is unnecessary. The same remark may be made in relation to my arguments on the divine unity; replies to which there have been none given.

In view of all the foregoing evidences, I feel perfectly justified in adopting the passage of scripture which says: "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God."

"When'er I see the garish sun
Rejoicing from the east to run,
And through the sky his journey hold,
With eye of fire and robes of gold;
(So proud his march, so bright he blazes,
That e'en the eagle as he gazes
Can scarce his burning track behold:)

Whene'er I view the stars display,
To deck the sky, their silver ray,
And mark along the welkin wide
The evening's placid empress glide;
My soul is full of him that made them,
The God whose magic power arrayed them
In all their grandeur, all their pride.

He day by day supplies the streams
Of the exhaustless sun's bright beams;
Nor this alone: the shades of even
He lights with fires sent down from heaven;
That all above and all below us,
Alike by night and day may show us
By whom these wondrous works are given.

'Tis God, whose skill and bounty dress
The spring in all its loveliness;
'Tis God, who gives to field and bower
The autumn's fruit and summer's flower:
The earth we tread, the heavens that bound us
With all within and all around us,
Declare his wisdom and his power.

The sailor sees him on the deep,
The huntsman on the mountain steep;
The man who cannot read in book,
Let him abroad on nature look:
Quick from his mind fall off its fetters,
And he can read in nature's letters,
What cannot, *cannot* be mistook.

He's seen by him who fills his quiver
To hunt for prey at Congo's river,
By him where endless summer smiles
With fadeless bloom on Asia's isles,

By him whose careless footsteps wander
Where broad La Plata's waves meander,
And where the Andes rears its piles.

Yes! oft our souls shall think of thee,
O God! who show'st thy majesty
Throughout the earth, throughout the sky,
In all that charms the heart and eye,
At morning, when the sun's appearing
Gives light to all, and life, and cheering,
And when the evening shades are nigh.

Where'er we dwell, where'er we go,
On hill above, in vale below,
By streams through silent meads that glide,
By forests waving in their pride,
We every where the proof discover,
That God around the earth doth hover,
And dwells for ever at our side."

ORIGEN BACHELER.

TO ORIGEN BACHELER.

LETTER X.

June 4, 1831.

I am quite willing that you should stir up sceptics to the duty and propriety of making head boldly against orthodox encroachments. It is not I who shall find fault, if thereby many are induced to incur the penalties of heterodoxy, and enlist as fellow-labourers in the vineyard of reform. All I recommend to them is, to count the cost carefully ere they adventure, and when they have once put their hands to the plough not to look back.

I shall not argue that men "owe me any consideration" for the course I have pursued. I have pursued it because I experience the approval of my own mind in so doing. When my exertions win for me the esteem of my fellow-creatures, I am pleased; when they do not, I am not discontented. I have learnt (as I think all who deviate from the beaten track of custom ought to learn,) to enjoy the world's approbation when it is accorded, and to live very happily without it, when it is withheld.

Yet if this subject of heterodox merit were worth discussing, I might remark that it is a passing strange perversion of all the common rules of morality to argue, that because a man performs a duty from the performance of which he might have been excused, men "owe him no consideration!" A celebrated French writer defines generosity to mean, "the performance of

any virtuous action which we might have neglected to perform without incurring blame or reproach." But let this pass.

Your "persecution of Christians by sceptics" is surely a jest. But I suppose the Spanish inquisitors, when they lighted, in the streets of Madrid, their heretic fires, complained, too, that the Holy Catholic Church was persecuted by the scoffs of unbelievers. Yet history does not very deeply sympathise with these same persecuted inquisitors. If there be, for those who desire to walk through this world peaceably and unchallenged, winning a cheap reputation, and obtaining easy absolution for the follies or even the vices in which they may indulge themselves—if, for such persons, there be a more easy, comfortable cloak than the all-concealing domino of orthodoxy, I have yet to learn what it is; and if, by wearing so convenient a mantle, they are to inspire pity as persecuted sufferers, or admiration as "heroes and martyrs," all I can say is, the pity and the admiration are cheaply purchased.

Your assertions, sir, regarding the superficial religious knowledge of distinguished sceptics, are unsupported and unauthorized. Paine, you remind us, wrote his "Age of Reason" without having a Bible before him: a pretty convincing proof, methinks, that he was tolerably acquainted with its contents. Were there not abundant evidence in the writings of Hume, of Gibbon, and Voltaire, that they too, had most carefully weighed in reason's scales the evidences of theology, and found them wanting, should we find Christians giving themselves such unwearied trouble to refute their arguments, and bring their persons into discredit or contempt? Men do not fight windmills now-a-days, whatever they may have done in the days of Cervantes.

As regards the glory of God, my opponent and myself, it seems, feel very differently. Were he the creator of caterpillars endowed with reason, he would require them, he now thinks, to honour and adore him: and, as an inferior can honour a superior, he would feel himself honoured by their adoration. He would also cause (or permit,) them to sin, that his own glory might be increased. Able to render them perfectly good and happy, he would prefer to make them vicious and miserable, that he might evince his mercy in the remission of their vice and his justice in its punishment.

Strange indeed must it appear to those who have not watched the aberrations of human reason, that any sane mind should conceive, and should imagine it finds comfort in conceiving, such a God as this! Every idea of wisdom, of justice, of disinterestedness, of benevolence, is (to my feelings) outraged in the conception. Could I believe in such a deity, I should be a miserable mortal. To live under an earthly tyrant who derives revenue from tolerated vices, and seeks his glory at expense of the peace or the life's blood of his vassals, is a sufficiently wretched fate. To imagine oneself the subject of a heavenly autocrat who seeks to gain glory, not to give happiness, is far,

far worse. Happy the man who escapes from the fears and the thralldom of such a conception! If this were the character of a creator of the universe—if a being thus vain-glorious, thus jealous, thus “angry with the wicked every day,” were indeed the monarch of the skies, of a truth the text were appropriate which tells us: “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!” The rack of the inquisition were but a paltry foretaste of the tortures that await the miserable victims of the *eternal auto-da-fe*!

Time is it—more than time—that phantoms so appalling should fade away before the light of reality. Enough, and more than enough, of fear and misery and tyranny, have we already in the world, without conjuring forth from the prolific regions of fancy, monstrous shapes to worship, and inconceivable attributes to adore. Let us not cast our dreams and our fears and our sophisms into the bubbling cauldron of imagination, thence to concoct an idol which we ourselves, its creators, fall down and abjectly venerate, as did the heathen of yore their molten gods. Let us follow *human* virtue; let us seek *human* happiness; let us speculate on *human* phenomena. If Gods exist, their ways, their thoughts, their doings, have nothing in common with ours. We cannot see them, hear them, feel them, imitate them. By searching we may not discover them; they and their ways, as the holy book of Christians tells us, are “past finding out.” In the language of the same book: “Like as the ground is given unto the wood and the sea to its floods, so they that dwell upon the earth may understand nothing but that which is upon the earth; and he that dwelleth upon the heavens may only understand the things that are above the height of the heavens.”

Why, then, idly consume our time when life is so short? Why vainly tax our reason, when reason has so much to do here on earth, in unearthly cogitations? Why madly pursue a phantom-science, in the investigation of which the human mind exerts its best powers in vain? Why seek to discover the existence, or to interpret the wishes, of a being, whom even the Scriptures declare to be incomprehensible?

In the opinion that reason leads us not to a knowledge of God, I am far from being singular. Very orthodox authority can be adduced in its support. The Scottish Demosthenes, Chalmers, in his celebrated “Evidences of Christianity,” admits, that the only mode in which the existence of God *can* be proved, is by first proving the inspiration of the Scriptures. The most famous of natural theologians, Paley, confesses, (p. 297,) that when we think of the deity, “the mind feels its powers sink under the subject.” The Christian Pascal complains that we cannot know God.* And Bishop Watson, the celebrated opponent of

* His words are: “Voyant trop pour nier, et trop peu pour m’assurer, ce uis dans un état à plaindre, et où j’ai souhaité cent fois que, si un Dieu

Thomas Paine, thus combats the idea, put forth by Paine, (who by the way was a devout deist,) that nature proves a God: "What think you," said the bishop, in his well-known "Apology for the Bible,"—"what think you of an uncaused cause of every thing? of a being who has no relation to time, not being older to-day than he was yesterday, nor younger to-day than he will be to-morrow; who has no relation to space, not being a part here and a part there, or a whole any where? &c., &c."

The erudite Arnobius, too, the ingenious and learned author of "*Adversus Gentes*," says, in that work, (*b. i., chap. xxxi., xxxiii., edit. Orell.,*) "O, unseen and incomprehensible, thou art the place and space and foundation of all things, without quality, quantity, position, or motion, of whom nothing can be said and expressed in the signification of mortal words: to understand whom we must be silent, and to obtain a vague and obscure glimpse of whom we must not utter a syllable! Oh, supreme king! it is not wonderful thou art not known; it would rather be wonderful if thou wert known."*

I am content to follow the bishop-philosopher's advice, and to be silent. I am content to know nothing of celestial spirits, and to confine my speculations to the affairs of our own planet.

I am pleased to perceive that, in the course of this discussion, you have not fallen into the vulgar argument, that a particular religious belief is necessary to moral virtue, and that he who does not fear God neither will he regard man. In abstaining from this argument, you have followed the example of Bacon, of Chalmers, and of the liberal portion of modern religionists. He who possesses a dignified consciousness of rectitude, feels that the springs of virtue lie deeper than speculative opinions; that the "light within," as an amiable sect expresses it, is not of theological nor of sceptical origin; that it exists, where it exists at all, independent of all creeds, in spite of all creeds; and that it exerts, over the better portion of our species, an influence which no faith, nor any want of faith, can either create or destroy.

soutient la nature, elle le marquât sans équivoque, et que si les marques qu'elle en donne sont trompeuses, elle les supprimât tout-à-fait: qu'elle dît tout ou rien, afin que je visse quel parti je dois suivre."

"Seeing too much to deny and too little to assert, I am in a pitiable situation; and I have a hundred times wished, that if a God sustains nature, she would furnish unequivocal proofs that he does; or that, if the indications she does afford are deceitful, she would suppress them altogether: that she would either say nothing or every thing, that I might know what I had to depend on."

Had Pascal possessed a little more philosophy and a little less enthusiasm, he might have reflected, that it were just as rational to complain that we do not know the inhabitants we suppose in the moon, as those we have imagined in the heavens.

* The treatise from which the above extract is made, was so much esteemed by the Christian church, that it procured for its author, in the reign of Dioclesian, a bishoprick.

You may probably call to mind the passage of Bacon's works in which he speaks of the moral character of a world without religion. He says:

"Atheism leaves men to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation, all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not; but superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute monarchy in the minds of men. Therefore atheism did never perturb states; for it makes men wary of themselves, as looking no further, and we see the times inclined to atheism (as the time of Augustus Cæsar,) were civil times: but superstition hath been the confusion of many states, and bringeth in a new 'primum mobile,' that ravisheth the spheres of government."

Dr. Chalmers expresses a somewhat similar sentiment in one of his sermons:

"Conceive for a moment, that the belief of a God were to be altogether expunged from the world. We have no doubt that society would suffer most painfully in its temporal interests by such an event. But the machine of society might still be kept up; and on the face of it you might still meet with the same gradations of character, and the same varied distribution of praise, among the individuals who compose it. Suppose it possible that the world could be broken off from the system of God's administration altogether; and that we were to consign it, with all its present accommodations, and all its natural principles, to some far and solitary place beyond the limits of his economy,—we should still find ourselves in the midst of a moral variety of character; and men sitting in judgment over it, would say of some that they are good, and of others that they are evil. Even in this desolate region of atheism, the eye of the sentimentalist might expatiate among beauteous and interesting spectacles—amiable mothers shedding their graceful tears over the tomb of departed infancy; high-toned integrity maintaining itself unsullied amid the allurements of corruption; benevolence plying its labours of usefulness, and patriotism earning its proud reward in the testimony of an approving people. Here, then, you have compassion and natural affection, and justice and public spirit,—but would it not be a glaring perversion of language to say that there was *godliness* in a world, where there was no feeling and no conviction about God?"—*Sermon IV. pp., 184-5.*

It is not one of the least cheering among the signs of the times that we hear such statements as these from the orthodox pulpit.

It was the perfect conviction I entertain of the mental and moral advantages which I have gained by a change of opinion, that first induced me to enter upon this discussion; and it is the same conviction which bids me hope, that it will not be without interest, nor without utility to many; especially to those who still stand on the bank of the Rubicon, and who fear to try their strength in its waves, lest they be carried away by

the current, and thrown on some treacherous quicksand, or arid desert.

I have crossed in safety, and found the opposite shore fair and pleasant; a land of freedom and of virtue, whence terror is banished, and where tranquillity reigns. He that is a bold swimmer, let him fearlessly attempt the passage. He will never regret the efforts it may cost him. He will become a better, a wiser, and—my experience for it—a happier man.

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.

[*From the Free Enquirer of March 12, 1831.*]

GOD.

SOME of our readers may be curious to trace out a few of the ancient and modern opinions regarding a "great spirit," as the Indians poetically phrase it.

The stoics probably believed in a corporeal God. They thought God a fire, warmth, or animal spirits; and admitted, besides, a number of inferior Gods, some of them siderial.

Thales, the founder of the Ionic sect, thought that all things were full of Gods and spirits, and proves this (oddly enough, I think,) by referring to the attractiveness of loadstone and amber: (see *Meiners*, "de vero Deo.") *Cicero* (in his "de nat. Deo.") says that *Thales*, like *Homer*, looked upon water as the principle of every thing.

Brucker (vol. i., p. 1077,) says, on the authority of *Cyrrillus Alexandrinus*, that *Pythagoras'* deity was "a subtle mundane flame, endowed with the active faculty of moving, forming, and, according to certain laws, of disposing all things." We have not got much further than this idea of the Samian philosopher, even in our days. *Meiners* ("de vero Deo." pp. 307, 308,) says the *Pythagoreans* derived all things from a number or numbers. What they meant by that let antiquarians explain.

Anaxagoras was one of the principal inventors of what we now call God. He spoke of two principles, God and matter, both eternal. But I have never believed, and do not now believe, that

his pupil *Socrates* shared his opinions on this point. I know that *Brucker* (vol. i., p. 560,) says, *Socrates* believed that "the deity, though he cannot be perceived, may be discovered;" but the same author also asserts *Socrates'* belief in various superior Gods and spirits, and interprets literally the story about his familiar demon. Now I conceive *Socrates* (from all we read of him,) to have been too wise a man to speak in this latter case other than metaphorically. And if in the latter, why not in the former also? We know that he was indicted before the Five Hundred as an atheist, and that his defence was, as I already stated "that while others boasted they were acquainted with every thing, he himself knew nothing;" (see *Lempriere*, art. *Socrates*.) *Lactantius* (b. iii., chap. xix.,) tell us that *Socrates* was wont to say, "What is above us does not concern us;" and thence the "Christian *Cicero*" argues (very naturally I think,) that the Athenian philosopher was opposed to all mysterious religion. What motive could this erudite and classic theologian have for attributing to *Socrates*, unfairly, sceptical sentiments?

Plato's deity was composed of three principles, God, matter, and idea. What he meant by his *idea* (*logismos* or *logos*,) probably *Plato* himself did not know any more than *St. John*; (see his gospel, chap. i.) *Plato* thought matter to be of a refractory and evil nature, so that God himself could not make much out of it; a very convenient way of accounting for the existence of evil.

Aristotle believed the deity and the world to be equally self-existent. He defines God to be "a mind, immutable, and impassable, an eternal and most perfect animal, perpetually employed in imparting motion to the universe."

Anaximines thought *Thales'* water principle too corporeal; so he took *air* as his principle of every thing; and *Diogenes Apolloniates* went so far as to ascribe to air divine reason.

According to most of the Jewish rabbi, God cannot be defined. The rabbi *Nicto* (quoted in the "*Dict. des Athees*,") says, God and nature, nature and God, are one.

The *soofis* of Persia believe that God extracts from his own substance not only the souls of men, but the whole material creation, which is thus only a production or extension of the divine substance, drawn, like a spider's web, from the body of the deity. These theologians also, ingeniously enough, compare the deity to a vast ocean in which swim innumerable phials of water; so that the water, if the bottles are broken, returns again to the bosom of the ocean. Human souls, of course, are the bottles; and death is the great bottle-breaker.

The *Brahmins*, when asked to show God, trace a circle; (see the "*Voyages de Dillon*;") and sometimes, by way of making the matter clearer, trace a triangle inside the circle. (*Dict. des Athees*, p. 323.) The Indian *Ved* or *Vedas* deals, like our own holy books, chiefly in negatives, in treating of the deity. It says: "He sees every thing, though never seen; hears every

thing, though never distinctly heard of. He is neither short, nor is he long; inaccessible to the reasoning faculty; not to be compassed by description; beyond the limits of the explanation of the Ved, or of human conception." (See a tract drawn up by *Rammohun Roy*, Calcutta, 4to, p. 14.)

Later Chinese philosophers do not give us any thing more tangible. Their *Li*, or great first cause, (vid. *Brucker*, vol. v., pp. 890, 891,) "has neither life, nor intelligence, nor authority, nor body, nor figure; and though it is not spiritual, yet, as if spiritual, it can only be comprehended by the intellect."

Truly, it would seem as if theologians were making game of poor, simple, human nature; and trying how many idle sounds they could make it gravely repeat, without suspecting the joke that is put upon it. If it were but an idle joke, 'twould the less signify; but it has been a very serious—a very *bloody* one, sometimes. There was nothing very jocular in the rack and thumb-screws of the inquisition, or in the doings of St. Bartholomew's night; nor, even in the fate of Servetus.

The ancient Christian writers have outdone, if it be possible, the Chinese philosophers in mysterious ingenuity.

The Christian bishop *Synesius*, as conspicuous for his learning as his piety, has some odd passages in his hymns; (vid. *Brucker*, vol. iii., pp. 516, 517:) they would be called, probably, very scandalous passages, were they not from the pen of the Cyrenian divine. He thus apostrophises the deity: "Thou art a father and a mother, a male and a female; thou art voice and silence!" And again: "Thou art the father of all fathers, and, being without a father, thou art thine own father and son." Again: "O source of sources, principle of principles, root of roots; thou art the unity of unities, the number of numbers, being both unity and number!" Again: "Thou art one and all things, one of all things, and one before all things."—But enough of Christian bishops.

I might pass on to speak of the Germans; of *Boehmen* with his "essence of essences;" of *Spinoza* with his two modifications of matter, thought and extension;* of *Leibnitz* with his "primitive unity," whence proceed all created and derivative monads;† of Swedenburg, with his celestial and spiritual sun: or (passing over to French philosophy,) of the spiritualities of *Des Cartes*, or the "internal moulds" of Buffon: I might rummage our own literature; might set forth the elaborate arguments of the laborious Dr.

* The consequence of defining God to be extension or space is well exposed by John Toland, in his "Motion essential to Matter." He says:

"Others, whose heads sublimer notions trace,
Cunningly prove, that thou'rt almighty space;
And space we're sure is nothing; *ergo* thou:
These men slip into truth they know not how."

+ *Leibnitz*, I believe, is usually regarded as a Christian philosopher, while poor *Giordano Bruno*, the first inventor of the *monad* system, and who called God "the monad of monads," was burnt in the year 1600 as an atheist. So much for good fortune!

Clarke in proof of the existence of God, *a priori*, and oppose to them the counter opinions of *Albertus Magnus*, *Thomas Aquinas*, and *Johannes Scotus* :—but I should tire myself, and (I am very sure,) my readers too, ere I had well crossed the threshold of that obscure and antiquated pile, the edifice of superstition. To it might most strictly be applied the lines in which Gray (I believe,) aptly enough hits off the characteristics of Gothic architecture, as containing

“Rich windows that exclude the light,
And passages that lead to nothing.”

R. D. O.

REMARKS ON THE FOREGOING.

I thank my opponent for having taken so much pains to furnish an article which goes so directly to prove the necessity of revelation. We here see what the wisest heathen philosophers were without the Bible. One word as to *Socrates*, and that is, that *his own words*, by me adduced in the preceding discussion, show him to have been a believer in a God; and not only so, but his dying direction for the sacrificing of a cock to *Esculapius*, shows him to have been an idolater likewise.

O. B.

NOTE B.

[From the *Free Enquirer* of April 30, 1831.]

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

Lockport, Sunday, April 10, 1831.

SIR,

I have noticed a statement going the rounds of the orthodox papers, that the editor of “*Priestcraft Exposed*” has renounced his scepticism and embraced the Christian faith. In No. 23 of the *Free Enquirer*, *Origen Bachelier* alludes “to cases of infidel conversions,” and cites you “to that of the editor of *Priestcraft Exposed* for example.”

This is an error—it is the printer, and not the editor of that paper, who is said to have laid aside his scepticism. It is a fact well known here that the printer never wrote an article for that paper; and it is also as well known that his talents are not of that order requisite for a writer on any general subjects.

Please correct the error, as I am well convinced the author of this statement intentionally misrepresented facts.

W. L.

[The writer of the above signs his name in full, but, in this strange world, I hesitate unnecessarily to expose individuals to

ill will. Mr. Bachelier, or any one else, can see the original letter, and learn the writer's name, by calling at our office. name of the *editor* of "Priestcraft Exposed" was Lym Spalding, and of the *printer*, Edwin A. Cooley.]

R. D.

REMARK ON THE FOREGOING.

Be it so, that the author of the account above alluded to, the trifling mistake of saying that the editor, instead of the printer, had renounced infidelity. This does not affect my proposition the least, which was, in substance, that an *infidel* had renounced infidelity.
O.

DISCUSSION

ON THE

AUTHENTICITY OF THE BIBLE,

BETWEEN

ORIGEN BACHELER

AND

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

*Let Truth and Falsehood grapple. Who ever knew Truth put to the worse
in a free and open encounter?—Milton.*

London:
JAMES WATSON, 3, QUEEN'S HEAD, PASSAGE,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

1853.

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TO THE READER.

not free and impartial inquiry we deprecate: it is hasty and arrogant sentiment."—*Bp. of Killaloe, (Knox); Two Serms., p. 39.*

word *prejudice*, as in etymological strictness it must, be
sted to mean, a judgment formed before examination,
e must regard as prejudices his opinions, however true,
is neglected to weigh them against their opposites, how-
lse.

not enough to inherit even that richest of treasures, truth,
would a legacied fortune or a patrimony. It behoves us
ly to earn truth for ourselves, not supinely to heir it from
efathers.

if we are thus to earn it, we must make acquaintance
ther beliefs besides our own, and be introduced to more
es than we have been cradled in. We must become citi-
the world of opinion; free to extend our voyage of dis-
beyond the inland sea of our own sect or party, and ready
1 to the foreign language of reply and rejoinder.

thine own opinions, friendly reader, or is it truth thou art
with? If thine own opinions, get thee some other book,
they shall be sheltered from scathe or harm: visit some
arena, where a favourite partisan may venture an entrance
enged, and effect an exit unassailed; rejoicing in self-
cent security; threatened by no antagonist more deadly
e phantom-opponent he himself conjures forth—the con-
scarecrow which he deftly dresses up in cast-off rags that

will own, and then demolishes with a comfortable inge-
hat every body admires. There shall thy pet opinions be
nursed, unvisited by the winds of controversy, and cur-
even from the sunshine of reason.

is truth thy mistress? Will it suit thee to hear thy infalli-
questioned—to see the fortress of thy opinions besieged?
his book of ours, perchance, may please thee. Here are
agonist scarecrows set up. The Christian, the sceptic,
esses out, in his own manner, his own arguments, and
defends the legitimate offspring of his own brain, or the
to of his own adoption. Here is no prizefighter's mock
in an effigy. The contest is conducted, in courtesy we
ut in earnest also.

PREFACE.

It is in such considerations as these, that we find apology for adding another to the thousand volumes of which the prolific press of this book-loving age is daily delivered. Among these thousands, how few that imitate the impartiality of a court of justice, and give both sides a free hearing, ere judgment is recorded!

I am not over sanguine as to the effect that this volume may produce, in disseminating the opinions which I myself feel to be true and useful. The time is past with me—the early age of enthusiasm—when I dreamed of thousands of converts, and imagined that what seemed self-evident to me must therefore so also seem to all my fellow-creatures.

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

[Origen Bachelier's Address to the Reader forms the Introduction to the first Volume of this Discussion.]

AUTHENTICITY OF THE BIBLE.

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

LETTER I.

SIR,

We now approach the discussion of the question which, to Christians and sceptics both, is of incalculable importance—a question in which their highest conceivable interests are involved, and upon which turn numerous other questions. A subject so momentous, and involving so many considerations, ought to be examined with the greatest possible candour, and with the most intense desire to arrive at a correct conclusion.

But before commencing this discussion, I would make a few remarks in relation to some points contained in the last reply to me, upon the divine existence; some of which, however, will not be irrelevant to our newly commenced subject of discussion. tending, as they will, to show the necessity of revelation.

Moral courage and mere “generosity,” are very different things. The former is the braving of opposition in the discharge of *duty*; the latter is the performing of a gratuitous act of excellence which strict duty does not require. These *gratuitous acts* may be performed or dispensed with as the individual sees fit; but *duty* is *not* a gratuitous thing, it being absolutely required; hence it can never be innocently omitted. And, should a period hereafter arrive when, as in former times, Christians shall be compelled to relinquish their religion or their lives, that same religion will again urge its claims, and hold its true disciples firm and faithful unto death. But surely 'tis no “jest” to denigrate the slander, reviling, and abuse so profusely lavished by sceptics on Christians, *some* persecution, though *less* than that before-mentioned—the misapplied inquisition case to be contrary notwithstanding.

My assertions respecting the superficial acquaintance of some of the most noted infidel writers with the religious subjects on which they wrote, are sustained by the best of all evidences—their own confessions, and their own writings. Now mark:—Hume *owned* he never read the New Testament with attention. Hume, by his numerous misquotations of scripture, *showed* the same in relation to himself. The memoirs and *diary* of Gibbon show that *he* never perused any able defence or judicious exposition of Christianity. And Voltaire, with all his genius and

wit, betrays in *his* writings, not only his superficiality on religious, but likewise on literary and scientific subjects. And were it not that multitudes are dazzled by wit, prejudiced by ridicule, and bewildered by sophistry, Christians would never take the trouble of refuting the productions of men of this description.

I have no where said, that it would be proper for God to *cause moral evil*, or that moral evil *thus* produced *would* promote the divine glory. Waiving the consideration of *that* point, as properly belonging to the Hopkinsian controversy, I have merely spoken of the *permission* of *such* evil, and the *causation* of *suffering*. Nor is it to be taken for granted, that God is "able," *consistently with his infinite wisdom*, "to render his creatures perfectly good and happy," by *preventing* the one, or *forbearing* to *cause* the other. Neither is it a fair representation of his *righteous retribution*, to speak thereof as of an *unrighteous auto-da-fe*. Nor yet is it any reason why we may not understand that a God exists, or that he requires of us the performance of duties, merely because we cannot comprehend that being himself. And the very circumstance of the brevity of human life, should serve to stimulate us to the exertion, the *immediate* exertion, of *all* our powers, in ascertaining and obeying his requisitions. I fear my opponent has not yet thus exerted his; for, had he so done, it is hardly supposable that he would have so little acquaintance with the Bible, as to attribute to that a long passage which it does not contain.

A word or two touching the Christian authors quoted by my opponent, respecting the existence of God, and the harmlessness of atheism.

First, Chalmers. Him I would offset by that "most famous of all natural theologians, Paley," who, strange enough! is one of the number quoted by my opponent to sustain his position, that "reason leads not to a knowledge of God," when that very man wrote a volume, to show how clearly reason *does* prove a God! Nor does the quotation from him adduced at all conflict with his sentiment in this respect. But especially would I offset, not only against Chalmers, but against Pascal and all other Christian writers who take this ground, the apostle Paul, who argues, Romans, chap. i. ver. 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, that nature *does* teach a God, and that the heathen are therefore without excuse for worshipping idols. As to the "erudite Arnobius," the quotation made from him merely shows that he considered God incomprehensible; and who does not so consider him? Should it be urged, that we disagree among ourselves on this point, I answer, so do infidels. If a Watson is presented as combatting my position, I will introduce Paine to combat that of my opponent, which he does, and that most severely; and, whether a devout *deist* or not, he was undoubtedly a devoted worshipper of a certain divinity formerly in high repute among the heathen. But the *harmlessness* of atheism! Had Bacon lived in the days of the former French revolution, he never would have penned

such a paragraph as appears in the last Enquirer. The late Robert Hall, after having witnessed that event, expresses himself thus: "As the heathens fabled that Minerva issued full armed from the head of Jupiter; so, no sooner were the speculations of atheistical philosophy matured, than they gave birth to a ferocity which converted the most polished people in Europe into a horde of assassins; the seat of voluptuous refinement, of pleasure, and of arts, into a theatre of blood.—Settle it therefore in your minds, as a maxim never to be effaced or forgotten, that atheism is an inhuman, bloody, ferocious system, equally hostile to every restraint, and to every virtuous affection; that, leaving nothing above us to excite awe, nor around us to awaken tenderness, it wages war with heaven and with earth: its first object is, to dethrone God; its next, to destroy man."

The aim of all the leading champions of infidelity is, to rob mankind of the benefits derived from the Christian religion, and throw them back into a state of gross and brutal sensuality. It had been the constant boast of infidels, that their system, more liberal and generous than Christianity, needed but to be tried, to produce an immense accession to human happiness. God permitted the trial to be made. In one country, and that the centre of Christendom, revelation underwent a total eclipse, while atheism, performing on a darkened theatre its strange and fearful tragedy, confounded the first elements of society, blended every age, rank, and sect in indiscriminate proscription and massacre, and convulsed all Europe to its centre. I might, if necessary, adduce hosts of *deistical* and *heathen* authors who denounce atheism as a pernicious sentiment. With Chalmers, I admit, that "even in the desolate region of atheism," there would be patches of moral verdure; *some* "integrity, patriotism, compassion, natural affection, and justice;" but with him too I have no doubt, that "society would suffer most painfully in its temporal interests by such an event" as the prevalence of atheism; for nothing, I think, can be more obvious, than that the disbelief in a God, and consequently of accountability to him, must have a most demoralizing influence on the mass of mankind, whatever might be its effect on the philosophical few. And 'tis this obvious truth that has induced the wise in all ages, who have even been destitute of the light of revelation, to inculcate a belief in superior powers, and in moral accountability. Josephus remarks that the Sadducees, whose tenets were, the denial of a moral government and a future state, were distinguished from the other Jewish sects by their ferocity, and that they were eminent for their inhumanity in their judicial capacity. And, again to quote Robert Hall: "It was late before the atheism of Epicurus gained footing at Rome; but its prevalence was soon followed by such scenes of proscription, confiscation, and blood, as were then unparalleled in the history of the world; from which the republic being never able to recover itself, after many unsuccessful struggles, exchanged liberty for repose, by submissio

to absolute power." Persius and the other heathen poets, made use of the sentiment of the non-immortality of the soul, as an encouragement to give way to whatever lust prompted. "Indulge your inclination," says Persius, "let us enjoy pleasures; this span of life that we enjoy is ours; you will soon become ashes, a shade, and a fable." I trust that the presentation of the foregoing view of atheism, will *acquit* me of having *incurred* the compliment *inflicted* on me by my opponent touching the needlessness of religious belief.

The proposition which I would first advance as a proper commencement of our present discussion is, that *revelation is necessary*. And one would suppose that enough had been presented in the preceding remarks, to establish this proposition. Nevertheless, I will give some further evidence on this point. Let me not, however, be misunderstood. I do not say that revelation is *indispensable* to a belief in God. I do not say that *nature* does not furnish evidences of his existence, or that those destitute of revelation *need* be ignorant thereof, or even ignorant of the duties which, under *their* circumstances, are required of *them*; but that *they are so*.

In support of the latter idea, we have the testimony of the greatest heathen philosophers, even in relation to themselves, together with the histories of ancient heathen nations, and the condition of modern heathen ones, of which we are ourselves, witnesses. Varro reckons up two hundred and eighty-eight opinions of philosophers, as to what constitutes the chief good. Many of those philosophers advocated suicide, and some of them committed it. Darkness brooded o'er their views of a future state; their ideas of God and of moral duties were unsettled and various; and while some real virtues were by them discarded as ignoble and debasing, absolute vices were placed on their list of excellencies. So much for the *wisest* of the heathen. But when we descend to the mass, either ancient or modern, and witness their adoration of gold, silver, wood, stone, reptiles, &c., and see them offering their children to Moloch, and themselves to Jugger-naut, and even literally devouring one another like beasts of prey; what reason have we to thank God, that our lot is cast in a land of Bibles!—But we need not search the records of antiquity, or visit foreign climes, to prove the necessity of revelation. Take a case in our very midst—that of sceptics. Discarding the Bible, and professing to follow what they call the unerring light of nature, how widely do they differ in relation to the most obvious and important truths. On the great question of all, the existence of God, they are strangely at odds, one believing therein, another disbelieving, another "suspending judgment," &c., &c., &c. One would suppose that sceptics, so far from arguing that revelation is unnecessary, would contend for the necessity of *more* than has already been given. Let this suffice for the opening of our new discussion.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

TO ORIGEN BACHELER.

LETTER I.

June 18, 1831.

In all discussions some one must have the last word, and it is quite as fair that you should have it as I: nay, fairer; you having (in my view of the subject) a very hopeless case to make out. I shall therefore trust the argument regarding the existence of a God to the justice and sagacity of our readers, without any aid from a rejoinder which would clog this second part of our discussion with arguments appertaining exclusively to the first.*

There is one argument, however, which belongs equally to the discussion on which we are entering, as to that which we have just closed: I mean the moral influence of religion on mankind. Its importance, too, entitles it to further consideration; particularly as I observe that you disclaim the liberality of sentiment for which your silence had inconsiderately induced me to give you credit.

Has revealed religion a moral influence on mankind? This is the question. Let us carefully examine it.

"It is the fashion of those who patronize an abuse," says some writer whose name has escaped me, "to ascribe to it all the good which exists in spite of it." Deeply does it concern us to examine whether this has not been the case with regard to religion.

We find individuals religious and amiable. If I had ever been disposed to doubt this, the recollection of one who watched over me in infancy and guided me in youth, would suffice to remove my scepticism. My own mother, (whose death I learn by the last arrivals from Europe) was a Christian of strictest sect and most conscientious practice: and (I speak from the faithfulness of memory, not from a partial impulse springing out of sorrow for the recent loss of a loved parent) she was the kindest and most affectionate of mothers. But, shall I outrage her memory by the supposition, that in her creed was the only source of her domestic virtue? that her goodness sprung, not from her heart, but from her theology? that she cared for her children, cherished her husband, and fulfilled every social duty, because the fear of hell was before her eyes?

Beautifully has the unworthy sentiment been exposed by an eloquent writer:

* I owe it to myself, to give chapter and verse (as I find them in a very handsome copy of the "Holy Bible," which was presented to me some years ago by an amiable quaker) for the text I quoted, and with which, it seems, you are unacquainted; 2 Esdras, chap. iv., ver. 21. If, as some Christians I believe do, you hold Esdras to be insufficiently canonical, I might furnish you with similar texts enough from which to choose: such as Romans, chap. xi., ver. 34; Jeremiah, chap. xxiii., ver. 18; Job, chap. xi., ver. 7, 8, 9; Ecclesiastes, chap. viii., ver. 16, 17; and a host of others.

"Let us not mistake causes! Let us not misconceive of effects! Let us not so wrong the heart of man, as when we see the turbaned follower of Mohammed invoking Allah, while he spreads the carpet for the weary traveller, and shares with him his bread—let us not, I say, so wrong the human heart, as to believe, that but for the written law of his Koran he would shut his door against the houseless, the friendless, and the hungry: or that when he opens it, he obeys not a law nobler and purer than that cried by his priest from the minaret—even that which is entwined and incorporated with his being, and which teaches him to pity in others the want which he feels within himself!"*

So speaks the generous heart. So would every heart speak, if the lips were not taught to repeat that we are miserable sinners, until all noble self-respect sinks under the ordained repetition.

I put it to yourself, sir. Is there nothing of virtue or kindness within you that would survive your spiritual creed? Will you indeed endorse Robert Hall's opinion, that where there is no religious belief there is "nothing around us to awaken tenderness?" Have you friendship merely by faith? and do you love at the bidding of theology? Or again, is it your catechism alone that deters you from joining the drunken revel, that warns you from the brothel, that bids you avoid the gambling table? Do you abstain from stealing, merely inasmuch as there is a hell? or from murder, only because a God forbids it?

Who would defend his creed, at expense of a confession so degrading as this? Or who, if he heard the confession from the lips of his dearest friend, but would shrink in involuntary suspicion from this catechetical virtue? For myself, I will trust my fortune and my life in the hands of him whose principles and affections I feel to be based on a generous and cultivated heart; I will not trust a sixpence of my property or a hair of my head to the man who has no other restraint but an enjoined decalogue!†

Human creeds may say what they please; human feelings are stronger than creeds. Those who have witnessed the stirring representation of Indian character by the talented Forrest, may recollect the spontaneous burst of applause with which the audience ever greets *Metamora's* noble reply, when tempted by imminent danger, to falsehood: "*Metamora cannot lie!*" The heart, even of the dullest, responds to the sentiment, and in-

* Frances Wright's Lectures, p. 114.

† Let me not be understood to argue, that a decalogue is not, in individual cases, an occasional restraint. The fear of hell on believers, as of the birch on schoolboys, has frequently, no doubt, a passing influence; but this is a poor argument in favour either of the old school or the old church discipline. The question is not, whether an abject fear of punishment has some effect; but whether the same, and far more than the same, effect, may not be produced by worthier and more rational means; whether boys may not be instructed without being stripped for a flogging, and men be governed without being threatened with a hell. The gentle and civilised spirit of modern improvement will soon decide, in both cases, that they can.

stinctively honours the source from whence it springs. How low, how grovelling, compared to this, is the so much vaunted restraint of orthodoxy! How would the generous enthusiasm of the audience have sunk, almost to contempt, had the child of the forest, fresh from some missionary sermon, have expressed it: "*Metamora will tell the truth, for fear of hell fire!*"

But far am I from resting the case here; far am I from contenting myself with the half-way argument, that the heart is a nobler and firmer basis of morality than the creed, and that the springs of virtue in man lie deeper than his belief. This is but trifling with the question. If revealed religion were useless only, its delusions might pass unchallenged by me. If its dreams were but related like other dreams, to kindle an innocuous, if an idle, imagination, it is not I, who would trouble myself about their refutation. But supernatural imaginations have ever been, and now are, far worse than superfluous—mischievous, frightfully mischievous. Unearthly dreams have been related in the thundering voice, and their reception enforced by the iron hand of tyranny. Religion's bitter jarrings have brought, not peace on earth but a sword. Its schisms have drenched the world with innocent blood, and raised to the honour of its God thousands of human hecatombs.

Melancholy and ungrateful is the task, to utter truths like these; and this the rather, because the milder religion of our own times often leaves to its professor virtues and charities, which, because it fails to annihilate them, it obtains the credit of producing. Painful is it to me, rudely to touch one venerated opinion, or startle one honest prejudice. But venerated opinions *must* be touched, and prejudices *must* be startled, ere mankind can be induced, freely to "prove all things and hold fast that which is good."

I speak here of *revealed religion*; that is, of a *belief in supernatural beings, one or many, to whom worship and obedience is rendered*; and not of ethical codes or moral precepts. I speak of religion, distinct from morality. And I pray your attention, sir, and our readers', to a condensed view of a few appalling facts, in illustration of religion's moral influence.*

I speak not of other religions than our own, because I am, in a measure, unacquainted with the details of their history. I know not how many thousands have perished under the wheels of the idol Juggernaut, nor how many millions were put to the sword to establish the religion of Islam. But, thanks to theological research, we *do* know something positive and definite regarding the history of our own church.

* I invite our readers to peruse with attention "*Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History*," from which many of the following particulars are drawn. It is an *orthodox* account of the church history through seventeen hundred years. And what an account! One would think that credulity's self could hardly peruse the enormous catalogue of wars, murders, intrigues, persecutions, and wholesale massacres that are crowded into its five volumes, without turning sceptic.

Yet even here I am compelled by the limits of this discussion, to curtail my illustrations. I shall not, therefore, run into an enumeration of the thousand and one forms of folly which devotion has assumed; I shall not allude to the countless individual dissensions and national jealousies to which it has given birth; I shall not recall the inhuman tortures which ecclesiastical ingenuity collected within the inquisitorial walls, nor the atrocious cunning with which the holy tribunal nourished human vipers to violate the privacy of families and outrage the confidence of friendship: I pass over all this, and shall speak of one item alone, the *actual loss of life* in religious persecutions and ecclesiastical wars. What the frightful total might be, may be faintly imagined by glancing at a few items.

Every one has heard of the famous dispute regarding the presence of Christ's body in the eucharist; but we are exceedingly apt to forget, that this transubstantiation controversy, which raged at intervals throughout Christendom for centuries, cost, according to the lowest computation, the lives of *three hundred thousand* human beings.

In like manner the quarrel of the *econoclasts* and *econoclasters*, or in other words, the image-worship controversy (which by the way, produced a bloody civil war in the islands of the Archipelago, under Leo IV.; and was the cause, under the Roman pontiffs Gregory I. and II., that the Italian provinces were torn from the Grecian empire,) cost, as ecclesiastical historians calculate, *fifty thousand* lives.

Theodora, widow of Theophilus, was induced (it is said by her confessor,) to institute in the third year of her regency, a furious persecution against the sect of the Manicheans: and of these there are estimated thus to have fallen in Greece, about the year 845, upwards of *one hundred thousand* persons.

The famous schism which preceded the burning of John Huss and Jerome of Prague, and the subsequent war of the Hussites, are estimated to have cost *one hundred and fifty thousand* lives.

The lowest computation I have ever seen places the number of lives sacrificed by the holy inquisition throughout Europe, from the time of its first establishment by Innocent III., in Narbonne Gaul, at *two hundred thousand* souls.

The religious war of Japan, caused by the Jesuits in the seventeenth century, cost, so history inform us, *from three to four hundred thousand* lives.

Yet it is atheism, not revelation—so Robert Hall tells us on authority which we shall examine by and bye—that is “an inhuman, bloody, and ferocious system!”

But even these frightful massacres sink into insignificance before others still more appalling. What the loss of lives was during the “world's debate,” as Gibbon calls the Crusades, it is impossible to estimate. There were *seven* distinct expeditions. When the *first* of these was announced, *six millions* of

pilgrim warriors are said to have assumed the red cross: yet doubtless a large proportion of these never reached the Holy Land, and many returned in safety. Bernard, whose enthusiastic eloquence chiefly aroused Europe to the *second* crusade, boasts, that throughout the whole continent, when the expedition marched forth, "*scarcely one man was left for the consolation of seven widows.*" We are doubtless far below the truth, then, in assuming the loss of life during these religious wars at *five millions!*

But one yet bloodier record remains! Las Casas, bishop of Chiapa, estimates, in his work on the Destruction of the Indians, (the materials for which he collected during a residence of fifty years in America,) that **TWELVE MILLIONS** of the unoffending aborigines were immolated to the Christian religion throughout this Western Continent!!! I check my pen. **EIGHTEEN MILLIONS** of human beings sacrificed in religious contention! And how little, even by such a frightful total, do we express the suffering experienced! the fears and anxieties of those who escaped; the mental agony of the survivors; the millions of widows—the tens of millions of orphans—who lived on, to drink, perhaps, even a bitterer cup than his who perished at once by the sword or at the stake! I can yet recollect the burning feeling of indignation, (more natural perhaps than rational,) with which, as a child, I perused in Richardson's History of the Discovery of America, the deeds of Cortez, of the bloodier Pizarro, and of their priestly associates and abettors; and how the conviction was stamped on my mind, in characters indelible, that the tree whence fruit so poisonous sprung, was the deadliest curse that ever afflicted the human race!*

And this is the tree whose fruit is declared to be "peace on earth and good-will to man!" Peace! when it has kindled more of war, and abetted more of massacre, than all other sources put together. Good-will! when its feuds have penetrated even to the domestic hearth, severed the closest friend-

* The spirit in which the missionary soldiers who acted the leading characters in the American tragedy thought and spoke, is aptly illustrated by the following characteristic extract from a letter written by a reverend Spanish father to his superior in Spain, and quoted in Irving's "History of New York." "Can any one have the presumption to say these savage pagans have yielded any thing more than an inconsiderable recompense to their benefactors; in surrendering to them a little pitiful tract of this dirty sub-lunary planet, in exchange for a glorious inheritance in the kingdom of heaven!"

If it be objected to my calculation regarding the Indians, that it was avarice, not religion, that overturned the empire of Montezuma, and buried the poor natives in gold mines, there to labour and to die, I reply that these expeditions and these oppressions, whencesoever originating, received, on all occasions, the ecclesiastical sanction; that the Spanish settlers were uniformly accompanied and encouraged in this bloody work by priests; and that the whole religious influence of Spain was exerted to hasten the catastrophe which deprived twelve millions of innocent individuals of happiness and life, to add to the glory of a merciful God!

ships, and split up the whole human race into discordant sects and schisms, hateful and hating one another.*

It matters not to tell me what supernatural belief and religious restraint *ought* to have done; I show you what they *have* done; and that they found precedent enough in the Pentateuch to justify their doing. When massacres more bloody than these shall be proved to have been committed by heathen nations, it will be time enough to thank God that we are not as other men are, and "that our lot is cast in a land of Bibles."

Space permits me not, till next week, to advert to your argument regarding the immoral influence of scepticism, drawn from the French Revolution; that bug-a-boo, which is set up in England to frighten republicans, and in America to terrify free inquirers after truth.

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

LETTER II.

New-York, June 25, 1831.

SIR,

A sceptic can *very well* dispense with having the last word. If *his* system is true, 'tis of very little consequence to prove it: 'twill be just as well hereafter for those who now reject it, as for those who receive it. Not so with the Bible. If *that* is true, "he that believeth not shall be damned." Hence there is great propriety in the exercise of the deepest solicitude on the part of the adherents of that, to bring men to its belief;—which by the way, is not a belief in the books of "Esdras," or any other books of the *Apocrypha*. The Bible, sir, is the Old and New Testaments, and not the Apocrypha. That the Apocrypha is sometimes bound up within the same lids with the Bible, is no more an evidence that it is a part of the Bible, than that the family registers inserted in some Bibles are a part of the same. It is very important that this should be remembered, seeing we are discussing the question of the *authenticity* of the Bible. Surely I am not to be understood as pledged to defend the Apocrypha in this discussion and this alone is sufficient to show, that that collection of writing is no part of the Bible.

It is quite amusing to observe the tortuous course of the abettor of error, and the facility with which they adopt and discard con-

* I speak here of religion as by law or by public opinion established, *and by salaried priests and written creeds sustained*. Religion, when suffered quietly to spring up or to die away at the dictate of unbiased conscience alone—when understood to be a private not a public concern—is comparatively harmless.

tradiçtory propositions to serve their turn. In his last letter but one, my opponent, to defend scepticism from the objection sometimes urged against it, that it is of a demoralizing tendency, took the ground, that the "light within" exists independent of *all* creeds, and in spite of all creeds, exerting an influence which *no* faith, nor any want of faith, can either create or destroy. Who then would have imagined, that the principal part of his last letter would be devoted to the attempt to show, that religious *belief* has been the cause of incalculable evil?

But admitting all he says to be true; admitting that eighteen millions of human beings have been sacrificed in contentions denominated religious; it does not hence follow that religion itself has been the cause. To see what is to be attributed to religion, we are to examine its injunctions, not the conduct of its professors. Suppose a member of a Temperance Society were to get intoxicated with ardent spirits, how unfair would it be to attribute his intoxication to the Temperance Institution, which utterly prohibits the use thereof! So of Christianity. How unfair to attribute the wars and crusades of Christendom to that religion, when its whole tenor, both in letter and spirit, is directly the reverse! Christianity says, Resist not evil; overcome evil with good; bless them that curse you; pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you. 'Tis unfair then, I say, to attribute the abuses which have obtained in Christendom, to this religion. Nor are those abuses attributable to the Pentateuch. The command of God to exterminate certain nations by him designated, could be no license even to the Israelites, much less to others, to exterminate *other* nations. Yet, after all, what are the Crusades, what are all the religious wars from the time of Constantine to the present, compared with what *would* have been, had scepticism all this time borne sway? The ten short years she did bear sway in *one* nation, she presented the world with such a scene of carnage and abomination as was before unknown and unimagined. An eye witness of that great tragedy, and an actor in some of its parts, (Gregoire,) thus describes it. "Multiplied cases of suicide, prisons crowded with innocent persons, permanent guillotines, perjuries of all classes, parental authority set at nought, debauchery encouraged by an allowance to those called unmarried mothers, nearly six thousand divorces within the single city of Paris, within a little more than two years after the law authorized them: in a word, whatever is most obscene in vice, and dreadful in ferocity." Their thirst for blood not satiated by the destruction of the objects of their hate, they gorged themselves with the blood of one another. But the reign of the sanguinary monster was necessarily short, devouring as she did herself; and no argument was requisite to bring the atheistic nation to their senses, and make them realize that the revelation which they had rejected was necessary, not only for the safety of their souls, but of their bodies. And if in ten years, and in one nation, scepticism accomplished so fearful a work, what would she not have

done, had she, instead of Christianity, been ascendant during the last eighteen hundred years? Why, sir, the human race would long ere this have become extinct, and nought but the tread of wild beasts, less ferocious, would be seen in places now thronged by men, and echoing with the hum and bustle of industry. I admit, that men are bad enough, with *all* the restraints of religion; and *for this very reason* would I object to the removal of those restraints. In the words of Franklin to Paine I would say: "If men are so bad *with* religion, what would they be *without* it?" Even Mercier, a professed deist, and a zealous advocate of the French Revolution, speaking of that event, says, "We have, in proscribing superstition, destroyed all religious sentiment; but this is not the way to regenerate the world." What though there is here and there a philosopher, one of a thousand, who, void of religious restraint, would not run to the excesses of the multitude? What though a Socrates would *only* barter his wife's chastity for gain, and a Hume excuse only *secret* adultery? It should not be forgotten, that mankind in general are *not* philosophers, and that they would therefore do *much worse even than this*, were the restraints of religion removed. What though the good man needs not the fear of hell, nor even the *penalties of law*, to drive him to his duty; is this a reason why the retributions of eternity and the retributions of the *law* should not be presented to the consideration of *bad* men? Sir, this hue and cry against the restraining terrors of religion, might just as well be raised against the restraints of law; and, to be consistent, those who raise it in the one case should do it in the other. *Let* them do it, and people will then begin to see whither this disorganizing principle is tending.

In my introductory letter, I had barely room to introduce in a very brief manner the first of a series of arguments which I intend to adduce in the course of this discussion, viz., that revelation is necessary. I will now somewhat expand, in further establishing this position. Indeed, the whole bearing of my present letter thus far, has tended directly to this point. The horrors of infidelity at the close of the last century, are a demonstration of the necessity of revelation which will not soon be forgotten. But I will now present some additional considerations, in continuance of what I presented in my last.

I argue the necessity of revelation, then, from the state of the pagan world, both ancient and modern. Among the Romans, *the very masters of the world*, men were made to fight with wild beasts, and to slaughter one another, for the entertainment of the public. In this manner, twenty thousand lives have been sacrificed in a month! Slaves were slaughtered for amusement, or thrown into fish ponds as food for lampreys! In many heathen nations, parents were permitted to destroy infants in embryo, or to strangle, or drown, or expose them, especially if sickly or deformed; yea, they were even *enjoined* thus to do by some of their most distinguished legislators and sages, as a wise

uns of ridding the community of burthensome members : s practice continues to this day, even among the *refined* and *lightened* Hindoos and Chinese ! Human sacrifices formerly railed throughout the heathen world ; and they still prevail many heathen countries. Even Greece and Rome had re-erse thereto on great occasions. The same practice existed ng the Egyptians, the Syrians, the Persians, the Phenicians, the various nations of the East, together with the Scythians, Thracians, the Gauls, and the Germans ; and ancient Britain er her Druids was likewise stained with the same bloody mination. In barbarian Ashantee, and other countries of stern Africa, their altars annually reek with the blood of asands ; and in India, of tens of thousands. And America, own America, had formerly her Montezuma, offering up his ty thousand human victims annually to the sun ! A similar tice has likewise been found to prevail throughout the vast ific. Nor was their religion *less impure* than sanguinary. ir rites and mysteries were polluted with all manner of enities ; and the imaginary practices of their gods were cited nction and sanctify the same. Idolatry every where abounded, the most ridiculous and demoralizing legends obtained for ne truths : and those legends had, as might be expected, their and legitimate effect. Paul's description of them is true to letter, as confirmed by their own poets and historians. They came vain in their imaginations ; they changed the glory of incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible , and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things ; dishonoured their own bodies between themselves : even : women did change the natural use into that which is against re ; and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the an, burned in their lust one towards another. And even as *did not like to retain God in their knowledge*, God gave them to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not con-ent, being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wicked-ovetousness, maliciousness ; full of envy, murder, debate, it, malignity ; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despite-proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to uts, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natu-fection, implacable, unmerciful."

ch, sir, was the state of the heathen world, when the sun of eousness arose, to dispel their spiritual darkness, and pour them the glorious beams of the gospel day. Philosophy, ce, and the arts, carried to the highest degree of improve-, had done what *they* could for mankind, and this was the t. The precepts of philosophy, being of human origin, ed authority to secure obedience, as must always be the with the maxims of mere human wisdom, (a most important n, by the way, for the necessity of revelation ;) and some ose very precepts themselves were faulty, containing false iples, and sanctioning vicious practices. Nothing, then,

could effect the necessary reform, but a system of religion both good in itself, and of divine authority. Such a system was Christianity. At her appearance, these hideous abominations instantly ceased; and among her primitive converts from heathenism, scarcely a single vice remained. And such is its effect to this day, wherever embraced and obeyed in spirit and in truth. This is the religion that is destined to stop the wheels of Juggernaut, and extinguish the blazing pyre, and civilize and bless the barbarian and the savage. 'Tis the world's only hope. In vain have they looked to philosophy, in vain to their own inventions. Their Socrateses and their Platos have been forced to acknowledge their ignorance and their blindness, and *their own need* of a divine teacher. Nor have mankind more to expect from infidelity. What has *she* ever done for them? What idolatrous nation has she reformed? What impure and sanguinary rites has she abolished? What vice has she eradicated? What suffering has she alleviated? "Into what obscure recesses of misery, into what dungeons, have her philanthropists penetrated, to lighten the fetters and relieve the sorrows of the helpless captive? What barbarous tribes have her apostles visited, what distant climes have they explored, encompassed with cold, nakedness, and want, to diffuse the principles of virtue, and the blessings of civilization?" No, sir, Christianity must reform the world, or it will not be reformed at all. Philosophy and infidelity there are enough in the heathen lands already, God knoweth; and these do *not* reform them. Christianity *alone* will do the work; and of this, even a Rousseau felt convinced when he said, "Philosophy can do nothing good which religion does not do still better; and religion does many good things which philosophy cannot effect at all." And, sir, were it not for this same religion, those who now affect to consider it unnecessary, would themselves be groping in heathen darkness. Rousseau admits, that the modern philosopher derives his better notions on many subjects from the scriptures, from early education, and from living in a Christian country, where, in spite of himself, he imbibes some portion of that religious knowledge which the scriptures have every where diffused. To hear men thus indebted to revelation declare that it is unnecessary, reminds one of the wiseacre, who thought the sun unnecessary, because it shines only in the day-time.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

TO ORIGEN BACHELER.

LETTER II.

July 2, 1831.

When you shall have proved, not that a belief in revelation is *necessary* to man's welfare, but that it is even *compatible* with

human happiness and virtue, then it will be time enough to argue, that the sceptic need give himself no trouble to disseminate his opinions. My position is, that supernatural beliefs make men sometimes vicious and almost always unhappy. I have said indeed—and most strongly do I feel the fairness of the assertion—that no faith, however theoretically revolting, can dry up the springs of virtue “in the better portion of our species.” There are spirits so noble, minds so beautiful, that their pure and happy influence neutralizes even the poison of superstition. Like the tasteful bee, they are attracted by the flowers only that are scattered over the pages of the Christian’s holy book, and they pass by the nightshade and the hemlock. When the Nazarene reformer bids us, “Judge not, that we be not judged;” when he exhorts us to “do unto others as we would others should do unto us;” when he rebukes the haughty Pharisee, and pleads the cause of the poor; when he crushes not the bruised reed, stopping the mouths and touching the consciences of the self-righteous accusers, by the memorable reproof: “He that is without blame among ye, let him cast the first stone at her”—when words of gentleness and deeds of mercy like these are recorded—the good and the gentle admire, approve the record. And they pass by the bloody precepts and disgusting narratives they find recorded in the sacred pages, as a bee, the poison shrub that grows up in her path.

Were such spirits only in the world, little were the harm that superstition’s self could do! But there are others (alas! too many,) who cull the poison berries, and give them forth throughout the earth, realizing here the hell they have fabled hereafter. In the Bible, the tyrant seeks and finds his defence, the inquisitor his credentials, the conqueror his permit, and the slave-holder his warrant. True, the amiable moralist may there find his precept, and the good man his rule of life; but the texts furnished to despots are not the less mischievous, not the less demoralizing, on that account.

You tell me that the religious murders of which I have spoken are not authorized by the Bible. Let us see.

The Israelites (so reads the story) were the chosen people of God, rescued from bondage by him, guided by his arm, instructed from his mouth. Their leaders held communion, and received commands from the deity himself. How were they bidden to act? Read, with a quiet pulse if you can, Numbers, chap. xxxi., ver. 1 to 18. Where, in all the records of heathen barbarity, is there aught to match this? A nation annihilated! Imagine, if your very fancy shrink not from the task, the drama of death. Imagine the Hebrew soldiers entering, (at the command of a God of mercy!) one of these ill-fated cities. They invade every house, and wherever a man is found they slay him without mercy, (ver. 7.) They pause not at the voice of nature. The heart-rending prayers of the poor women and affrighted children fall unheeded on their ears. The sick are

stified in their beds. The grey hairs of age go down, in blood, to their grave. Ere evening, every house is a house of murder, every threshold is died in gore. Before the sun sinks on the devoted city, *every wife among its thousands is a widow, and every child an orphan!* The next morning breaks on a pile of smoking ruins!

"Even as the Lord commanded Moses!"

But the catastrophe of the sacred drama is yet to come. The very soldiers shrunk from ministering to their God's thirst after blood! They took captive the women and children.

The prophet of the Lord was wroth with the officers of the host. Their half-mercy excited his anger, and roused the displeasure of an all-good creator. "Have ye saved the women alive?" he said. (My pen falters as I transcribe,) "Kill every woman! kill every boy, even the suckling at the breast! Keep the women-children for yourselves!"

And he was obeyed! Mighty triumph of superstition over nature! evidence too frightfully convincing, that men can imagine monsters, till the imagination is realized in themselves!

My readers! can ye picture forth to yourselves the scene that is to follow? Do not your imaginations shrink in horror even from the task of conceiving its superhuman atrocity? the tens of thousands of poor victims,* assembled like sheep for the slaughter on the field of death? the swords, yet red with the blood of their fathers and husbands, drawn on the weak, defenceless, unoffending, and unresisting widows and orphans?

They say that a battle-ground, when the human storm is over, is a frightful sight. And well may we believe it! The gashed limbs, the mutilated trunk, the gay ornaments of war dyed red with the stream of life, the ghastly countenance and glazed eyes settling in death, and, worse than all, the piercing meanings of some poor wretch who begs of the passenger, death as a boon and a blessed relief from agony—all this is horrible; it might shake the strongest nerves and sicken the hardest heart.

But who ever described—who, except the author of the Pentateuch ever imagined—a field of blood on which lay the murdered corpses of *fifty thousand women and children*? What pen *could* paint the scene that must have passed, ere the slaughtered heaps lay there, a blot on humanity too foul for credence—an atrocity too horribly savage, even for credulity's self to believe!

Yet bear with the inhuman conception for a moment. Conceive the onset, too cowardly, too brutal, to be characterised in human language! Suppose the innocent blood poured—the gentle victims immolated! And then imagine a man, a prophet

* The women-children (verse 25,) were thirty-two thousand; the male children must, of course, have been nearly the same; and the women cannot, in proportion, be estimated at less than twenty thousand; together upwards of *fifty thousand*.

—ay! or if you please, an angel from heaven,—who points to the field of butchery, and tells you: “These slaughtered heaps were murdered at the command of a God of peace, of kindness, of goodness infinite, whose tender mercies are over all his other works! The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord!”

It were an insult to your understandings, and a worse insult to your hearts, to ask you whether you could respond to a sentiment so monstrously horrible, “Amen!”

Shall I quote for you still another example? It is at hand: 1 Samuel, chap. xv., ver. 3 to 33.

“Slay both man and woman! infant and suckling! ox and sheep, camel and ass.” Saul spared not indeed the women and children, but the king and the best of the cattle; and because he did so, “it repented the Lord that he had made him king!” (ver. 11.)

Have ye not yet “supped full of horrors?” I can furnish you with texts sufficient: Joshua, chap. x., ver. 24, 28, 30, 37, 40.

“He left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded!”

And wherefore this demoniacal extermination of people after people? It is written: Joshua, chap. xi., ver. 18, 19, 20, “It was of the Lord to harden their hearts, *that they should come against Israel to battle, that he might destroy them utterly, that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses.*” The deity found not sufficient fault to excuse the butchery; so he hardened the hearts of the poor heathen, *that he might destroy them!*

Ere my reason can receive, and my heart acknowledge, such atrocities as these for the doings of a benignant deity, may I rest with my fathers in the quiet grave!

“To see what we are to attribute to religion,” (argues my opponent with much justice,) “we are to examine its injunctions.” These are its injunctions! the express injunctions of God to his chosen people. And am I to be told that we are not called upon—not even authorised—to follow an example emanating from a source so venerable? No? To what purpose, then, is the example recorded? Is that virtue in one age of the world which is vice in another? Was it an action worthy of deity himself four thousand years ago, to preside at the butchery of fifty thousand heretic widows and orphans; and would the same scene brand a human actor with foulest infamy to-day? Did not Torquemada, that exterminating angel of the inquisition, find, in the pages of the Pentateuch, precedent on precedent sufficient to justify atrocities far, far blacker even than his? Moses, the pseudo-chosen of God, was the prince of inquisitors. *He* slaughtered, on one day, one fourth as many victims as the holy inquisition devoured in six centuries! And, with a burning cruelty, before which the flames of all modern

passions pale into insignificance, *his* choice of victims was gentle women—was innocent infants alone! Ye talk of the heretic burnings of Lisbon or Madrid, as of the doings of fiends! Spare your pity—your execration—for the Midianite auto-da-fe! for that single deed, which overtopped the accumulated cruelties of ages! for that one day, which outdid the aggregated crimes of a modern world!

And we are told of gladiator fights, and Chinese exposure of sickly infants! and bid to imagine what the world had been but for revelation!—What it had been! If one modern nation had executed one only order so eminently atrocious as this single command of Moses, (and it is but one of a hundred recorded in the Pentateuch,) the incredible rumour would have rung from land to land, from continent to continent; and the civilized world would have instinctively risen in mass, to sweep the murderers from the face of the earth.

And these were they whom God selected as his children of preference! they for whom he made a path through the Arabian gulf! they before whom he journeyed in a pillar of cloud by day and a flame of fire by night! they whose laws were engraved by the almighty finger, and promulgated in thunder from Mount Sinai! they whose journeyings were directed and whose actions (spirit of mercy!) were *commanded* by him! A people so sunk in the very abominations of cruelty, that even the dull sensibilities of modern civilization would have burst forth into one universal cry of abhorrence, and united, with far readier zeal than against the black flag of the Algerine, to annihilate this scandal on mankind!

And this is the pattern nation from the record of whose virtues we are told “the modern philosopher derives his better notions!” These are the tales we are to palm on the unsuspecting innocence of lisping infancy, that its inborn depravity may be extinguished, and its tender charities awakened to all its fellow-creatures!

If there be, in human reason and in human feeling, the power to believe absurdities so glaring, after having distinctly seen and felt what it believes, then must the present generation die out in their superstitions, and we must look to the next for clearer heads and better hearts.

Nor is the Pentateuch a record of cruelty alone. Tell me the crime so black, the vice so preposterous, that it was not practised among the selected people. The idolatry of heathen nations? See Exodus, chap. xxxii., ver. 1 to 6; and see the example even of him who was thought to deserve the title of the “wisest of men:” 1 Kings, chap. xi., ver. 5. Their human sacrifices? See Judges, chap. xi., ver. 31, 39. The brute intolerance of Islamism? See Deuteronomy, chap. xi., ver. 3; Exodus, chap. xxxii., ver. 27, 28. The unnatural vices that sully the satires of Juvenal and the odes of Anacreon? Read the doings

of the men of Gibeah, Benjamites, the descendants of the chosen son of Jacob: Judges, chap. xix., ver. 22.

I ought not, perhaps, to stop here. I ought perhaps to ask my opponent whether he, or any other decent man, would read aloud to his sister or his daughter, passages so gratuitously and outrageously obscene as are to be met with throughout the Old Testament. I ought perchance to quote, as others have done, a dozen such passages as Ezekiel, chap. iv., ver. 12; or chap. xvi., ver. 1 to 63; or Hosea, chap. i., ver. 1 to 6; chap. iii., ver. 1 to 5, &c. And I ought to ask my opponent whether, in the course of his life, he ever saw greater indecencies in print; and whether a young woman in whose hands should be detected any book (not labelled the "Holy Bible,") and containing only a tenth part of the sully and unseemly imaginations that are scattered throughout the Scriptures, would not lose her reputation for ever. This, it may be, is the course of argument I ought to pursue. But it repugns me to enter into the disgusting details: and I therefore, for the present, here rest my reply to the argument, that such a revelation as this is necessary to lead men to kindness, to purity, and to happiness.

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

P.S. The length to which this reply has extended compels me to defer all allusion to the French Revolution till my next.

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

LETTER III.

New-York, July 9, 1831.

Sir,

To say that "no faith nor any want of faith can destroy the influence of the light within," is saying in other words, that *religious* faith is *not* "incompatible with human happiness and virtue." But as this position, after having been strenuously insisted on by my opponent, to screen his scepticism from the charge of being of a demoralizing tendency, is at length by him abandoned, in his equally strenuous attempt to stigmatize religion with a similar charge, no argument will be necessary on my part to show, that it is of great importance that a man's views in relation to religious subjects be correct. Let us therefore hear no more of the non-importance of a man's creed.

The parade of blood and slaughter made by my opponent in his last reply to me, was a mere appeal to the passions, without the least regard to the circumstances of the case. It is too obvious to need any argument to prove, that the great arbiter of

life and death can with as much propriety employ the sword to accomplish the destruction of a people as the earthquake, or famine, or pestilence, or any other means. The only question is whether he *did* so employ it in the cases recorded in the Old Testament. Most assuredly, the agonies of death are no greater when the dagger gives the fatal blow, than when the earth engulphs and crushes her inhabitants with her mighty convulsions. Death is a debt due to nature by all the living: 'tis a dread and an awful scene, appear as it may. But so far is the sword from being its most dreaded instrument, that it is mercy itself compared with some of its natural ones. Witness the cancer, consuming its victim by atoms; the varioloid, putrifying him alive; and numerous other diseases, from which the sword would be a relief. I say then, again, that all the "flourish of trumpets," all the display of "raw head and bloody bones," in my opponent's last letter, touching the case of the Jewish wars, was a mere appeal to the passions, and might just as well have been played off against the God of nature. As well might he have brought into view the warrings of the elements, as an argument against the existence of any God whatever, not excepting the finite one of Plato, as to pursue the course he did in relation to the God of the Jews. Yes, even against the existence of the finite God of Plato, whose being he has not ventured to deny; for 'tis idle to admit a God of sufficient power to superintend and regulate *in any manner whatever* this vast universe, and yet unable to divert the course of the earthquake, or the torrent of liquid fire pouring forth from the crater of the volcano. Pointing his readers to immured Pompeii and the engulfed Lisbon, he might have exclaimed: In the book of nature, the tyrant seeks and finds his defence, the inquisitor his credentials. Where, in all the records of heathen barbarity, is there ought to match this? Cities annihilated! Imagine the sweeping deluge overwhelming one of those ill-fated cities. It invades every house, destroying men, women, and children, regardless of their heart-rending prayers, stifling the sick in their beds, and bringing down the hoary locks of age in blood to their graves. The morning breaks on a pile of smoking ruins!

Even as the Lord commanded the elements.

Ye talk of the burning of heretics, and of gladiatorial combats. Spare your pity, your execration, for the auto-da-fe of Mount Vesuvius, and the murderous quakings of the earth.

Such, I say, might have been the language of my opponent, as well as that which he did adopt. Such *is* the language of the avowed atheist; and most efficiently too does he ply it against those who reject the Bible on account of the Jewish wars, and who nevertheless do not reject the God of nature. And well indeed *may* he so ply it: for who are ye that do not deny the God of the hurricane and the earthquake, of famine and pestilence, of fire and flood of the miseries of life and the agonies of death; and yet reject the God of Israel? Nature

and revelation reveal a similar God; and this very objection urged by my opponent, is an evidence in our favour. Admitted, that without the command of God, the exterminating wars of the Israelites would have been murder. So would be the devastation caused by the elements, if wielded by man, uncommanded by infinite wisdom. But when the omniscient utters the decree—when he lets loose the raging winds, and kindles up volcanoes, and heaves the ocean, and darts the lightning, and rends the earth, and bids the avenging steel leap from the scabbard, to lay some sinful nation in the dust; where crawls the wretch audacious that dares say to him, What doest thou? Come forth, ye puny race, and try your strength with the eternal. Encase yourselves in armour impervious to his fiercest thunderbolts! Array yourselves with the elements of nature, hurl your fierce thunderbolts abroad, and hold the world in awe! Who, who are ye that set your mouths against the heavens, and arraign the Almighty at your bar? “Have ye an arm like God? or can ye thunder in a voice like him?” Cease then the unequal conflict, “lest he tear you in pieces like a lion, and there be none to deliver.”

It was not till the iniquities of the Canaanites were full, that God awoke to judgment. Their gross idolatry, their brutal sensuality, their vile abominations, their horrid and impious rites, rendered them so loathsome and abhorrent, that the earth could no longer endure them. Then went forth the high behest, O sword! go through the land!—It went, and cleansed that land from its pollutions with the blood of its inhabitants. Their high places of idolatry were destroyed, their altars overthrown, their pillars broken down, their groves burnt with fire, their graven images hewn in pieces, and the land which had been besotted with the most stupid rites, and defiled with the grossest abominations, and crimsoned with human sacrifices, became at once the glory of the earth. There, where had clanged the gongs of the fiery god, and smoked the carcasses of human victims, and resounded the shrieks of tortured innocents, now rang the high-sounding cymbal, and ascended the incense of devotion, and pealed hallelujahs to the Lord. And it was there alone, in that land once so polluted, that the knowledge and worship of God were preserved from century to century, while all the world besides were groping in the thick darkness of spiritual midnight. There were the people enjoying the benefits of a religion sublime and glorious beyond human conception, while those nations that were infinitely their superiors in science, philosophy, and almost every thing besides which the powers of man can compass, were immeasurably distanced in this most important subject of all. How was this? How, but that this religion was from heaven? And shall we be told that such a religion is not compatible with human happiness? Yea, shall it be said that this religion was unnecessary? Then was it incompatible with human happiness, then was it unnecessary to quench the flames that consumed

the human race, and to dry up the fountain of moral pollution that forced the land to disgorge its inhabitants. True, those who succeeded to their places were not angels. They were frail human beings; and when they transgressed, God punished *them*. But, compared with what it had been, Canaan was a heaven. When therefore we view this subject in the light shed by the mighty operations of divine providence on a general scale, we can but be struck with the resemblance, and admire the wisdom therein displayed. But, as I have already said, so now say I again, that God's special command to the Israelites to exterminate certain nations by him designated, could be no warrant to them, much less to others, to exterminate *other* nations; wherefore, "the tyrant, the inquisitor, the conqueror, and the slaveholder," can find no authority in the Bible for *their* course. Nor does it in the least impeach the justice of God, that he should have hardened the hearts of those to rush upon their own destruction, who so oft had, with nerves full braced, sent their offspring shrieking to theirs. The saving of the women children, is no proof of "lust" in the Israelites. Whether they were saved for servants or for wives, does not appear. In either case, there was nothing like lust. And as to the reputed obscenities of the Old Testament, whatever the fastidious may say, a man that publicly denounces marriage, and recommends *placements*, and writes "*Moral Physiologies*," may as well waive that subject. Still if he "ought" to have quoted what he denominates obscene passages of scripture, and yet forebore thus to do on account of their contents, *duty* sits very loosely on him.

A few words more on the subject of the necessity of revelation, will bring this branch of the discussion to a conclusion.

In my last, I presented a brief view of the heathen world. I will now select from the mass, some of their best and wisest men, and see what even they were without revelation. At the head of these perhaps stands *Socrates*. Him we find involved in painful perplexity relative to the most important truths. He doubted whether a holy God could forgive sin. He said it was necessary to wait for some person to come and teach us how to behave ourselves toward God and man; that we know not how to pray, and therefore that it would be better not to pray at all; and that the chief good consists in knowledge. Notwithstanding his theory, he complied in practice with the idolatrous worship of his own country. He made use of profane language, was guilty of impure amours, and prostituted his wife for gain. So much for this prince of heathen philosophers. *Plato* ranks next. He agreed with *Socrates*, as to our ignorance of duty to God and man. He made the chief good consist in being like God—which conformity to God, however, he taught to be, "a good habit of genius;" which habit was to be attained by music, arithmetic, astronomy, and geometry, together with gymnastic exercises!!! He tells us, (and *Pythagoras* agrees with him,) that the principle of good is unity, finity, quiescent, straight,

an number, square, right, and splendid; the principle of evil, y, infinite, crooked, even, long of one side, unequal, left, ure! He taught, that he may lie who knows how to do it fit season; and he made a distinction between lying with lips, and in the mind. *Seneca* agreed with Socrates and philosophers with regard to man's ignorance of duty. He there is something in which a wise man excels God; that a should be an admirer of himself alone; and that God canelp human calamities. He made use of profane language, was immoral in other respects, notwithstanding all his *is* in his *writings*,—and he likewise advocated suicide. o said he could more easily tell what he did *not* think, than he *did* think, concerning the nature of God. He comled revenge as a duty. He said that there was no reward virtue but honour, and that nobody was indebted to God for e. He, too, advocated suicide. And many other of the en philosophers advocated it, and carried about with them means of committing it, and did commit it, rather than fall the hands of their enemies; as, for example, Demosthenes, Brutus, Cassius, and others. *Lycurgus* allowed adultery e wife in certain cases, and Plutarch commends him there-

Calicratides, the Pythagorean, tells the woman, that she bear with the husband's irregularities, since the *law* allows to the man, and not to the woman. *Aristippus* taught, that se man may steal and commit adultery and sacrilege, when rtunity offers. Whoredom and its kindred vices were tioned both in opinion and practice by lawgivers, statesmen, osophers, and moralists, and are characteristics of heathen tries to this day. Theft was tolerated in Egypt and Sparta; in the latter country, and even at Athens, the seat of heathen ement, it was a *law*, that infants weak or deformed should illed or exposed; and the Athenians were permitted to de and enslave any people whom they deemed fit to be made es. Revenge was inculcated by almost all the heathen phipers. Pride and love of applause were by them accounted ies. Suicide was considered the strongest evidence of ism. While humility, patience, meekness, and forgiveness, e regarded as marks of meanness and want of spirit. Their s of God, and of their duty to him, of the origin of things, he future state and its retributions, and of the highest good nan, were confused, contradictory, and painfully unsettled. the last subject, viz., man's chief good, Varro, as I have dy observed, reckons up two hundred and eighty-eight erent opinions among them. Some say there were upward hree hundred.

the foregoing summary, we behold what the wisest of men without revelation. We find them all afloat, without rudder, or compass, unable to direct themselves, much less others. ay of their doctrines and maxims were absolutely evil, which, g in accordance with the depraved human heart, would find

ready obedience; but such of their precepts as were good, were destitute of authority to back them, and were of very little efficacy with the licentious multitude, being considered by them but as the opinions of men, and in no wise obligatory. And hence their sages always found it necessary to pretend a divine original for their injunctions—a demonstration of the necessity of revelation. But with all their pretended oracles, and their famed philosophy, they could not preserve the mass from putrefaction; and at the time that Christianity made its appearance, all nations, the Jews alone excepted, were in the lowest depths of moral degradation. And thus do they continue to this day, wherever Christianity has not been established; thus will they continue *till* its establishment; and thus would it be with us, were it not established here. My opponent should recollect, that any quotation to this effect in my last, was from the infidel Rousseau. Besides, it is in accordance with fact. Indeed, had it not been for the light reflected from revelation, not only the heathen, but ourselves also, would have been many degrees below heathenism itself; for what little of truth the heathen philosophers had, was borrowed from the Old Testament, or orally transmitted from patriarchal times; and the *superior* light which infidels have, is borrowed from Christianity. So that, had no revelation ever been given—had neither the patriarchal, nor the Jewish, nor the Christian dispensation been known;—in a word, had not what the Bible records been realised, men would at this hour be nearly on a level with the brutes—as is actually the case with the Hottentots and some others, that have from time immemorial been isolated from the great body of mankind.

From this view of the subject, I would draw this conclusion: that a revelation has been made. For 'tis unreasonable to suppose, that God would make a world of rational beings, and leave them utterly destitute of a knowledge of himself, or of the duties on them incumbent.

I will conclude this letter by remarking, that, on the subject of the former French revolution, I am fully prepared; and that, before closing this discussion, I shall bestow a passing notice on modern infidel philosophers.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

TO ORIGEN BACHELER.

LETTER III.

July 16, 1831.

How often, in reading the defence of a system by its partisans, do the words of my native country's sweetest poet, Robert Burns, flow to my lips!

"Oh wad some pow'r the giftie gie us,
To see oursels as others see us!"

Now calmly we can examine all dogmas, how rationally judge needs—except our own!

And I pointed out to you, in the *Koran*, such a tale of horror in the 31st chapter of Numbers records; had the command been Mahomet's, not Moses', to "kill every woman, and to kill all male children, but the women children to keep alive for selves;" had it been Allah, not Jehovah, who was declared to have presided over the field of blood; how utterly unanswerable would have been, in your eyes, my argument! how eloquently would you have inveighed against the brutality and viciousness of Islamism! In terms how feeling would you moralise on the artful success of an impostor, and mourned the frail credulity of man! And how triumphantly would have refuted the weak casuistry of the turbaned idolator, should undertake to defend his prophet, or his deity's thirst for blood! Suppose the dialogue:

My Bachelier.—And this is your defence of your prophet and his God, that the same being who hurls the lightning may brandish the sword, and no man may ask him, "What doest thou?" *My Thomedan*.—In Allah's hand are the hearts and the lives of creatures; and shall a created worm deny his right to harden them or destroy the other?

B.—And what think you of the bloody example here set by your vaunted prophet? Truly your *Koran* "brings not peace on you, but a sword."

—The command was to the children of Islam, and against idolatrous Arabs; not to us, or against any modern heretics.

B.—What? and that which Mahomet did and Allah approved, shall not the Musselman now be permitted—nay, be urged, to imitate? To what purpose the record, if not for your approval or imitation?

—Allah knows best; I judge not.

B.—But if you judge not, your brethren have judged; and have acted too. The example which Mahomet set, your caliphs and their lieutenants have followed:—and followed most consistently! When the Moslem steel sunk through the heretic heart up to its crimsoned hilt,—when your engraven blades† drank the mother's life-blood, or offered to Allah, as a grateful libation, the reeking tide from the living infant's ghastly death-wound—'twas your *Koran* recorded the precedent—'twas your prophet himself that sanctioned the slaughter.

more abominable race of governors never existed than the lieutenants and caliphs who succeeded Mahomet.—*Oakley's History of the Saracens, Reign of Moawijah I.*

On the blades of their scimitars some verse from the *Koran* is usually inscribed.—*Russel*.

M.—But our holy prophet commands not the faithful so to act *now*.

O. B.—Out on the paltry evasion! If ye were then the chosen of Allah, ye are his chosen still; if the heretic was his abomination in those days, he is equally his abomination in our times. And if you acted up, not to the spirit of the times, but to the letter and the spirit of your Koran, your scimitar would even now flash from its scabbard, and my head would roll in the dust.

M.—But your head is safe, thanks to the civilization which our holy religion has wrought. If there be violence even now that the prophet's name and the Koran's precepts have spread over half the civilized world, what would there have been had the benighted nations stumbled on, their paths unlighted by the lamp of Islamism?

O. B.—By the souls of my fathers, but you exhaust my patience!* Your Koran sanctions murder—wholesale murder—infant murder—the butchery of orphans and widows; your better nature bids you shrink from the bloody example; and then ye rail against the nature that whispers peace and mercy, and glorify the book that commands slaughter and war!

M.—By the beard of Mahomet, but you slander our holy book. It commands not slaughter.

O. B.—No? What says Deuteronomy, chap. xx., ver. 12, 13? The command was general, applied to *all* their enemies—to *all* unbelievers.

M.—It is not addressed to us.

O. B.—And does the command "thou shalt not steal" apply to you? It, too, was addressed to your forefathers only. The one is just as imperative as the other. And what think you of Deuteronomy, chap. xii., ver. 2, 3? Is not this an express *command* to use violence in suppressing every religion but your own? Is it not the very essence of intolerance and persecution? Does it not *imperatively command* you to tear down our cross and plant the crescent above it? to burn our churches, and build your minarets on their ruins? Allah *commands* to use the sword as the fittest argument. The command is an outrage on reason, on mercy, on common sense. The book that contains it is *not* divine. The Koran is a human invention, and its Allah a fabled idol.

M.—Dog of an unbeliever, you blaspheme! Allah akbah!† His ways are unsearchable. His will is hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes. And for the sacred Koran, what a holy light has it shed around it! "Here alone

* My friend Mr. Bachelier, or rather my personification of him, evinces, I must confess, a degree of impatience throughout this dialogue, more natural than rational. Honest zeal does not always coolly weigh its expressions.

† God is great.

in this land so polluted, has the knowledge and worship of Allah been preserved from century to century, while all the world besides were groping in spiritual midnight. Here are the faithful enjoying the benefits of a religion sublime and glorious beyond human conception, while those nations who are infinitely our superiors in science, philosophy, and almost every thing besides, have been immeasurably distanced in this most important subject of all. How was this? How, but that our Koran was from heaven?"*

And now, let my opponent suppose the tables turned upon him, and that the Mussulman calls him to account for some of the scripture precepts.

Mussulman.—Your Bible enjoins slavery. Read Leviticus, chap. xxv., ver. 44, 45, 46.

Origen Bachelier.—But that command was to the children of Israel, not to us.

M.—Ah! so you have already forgotten how indignantly you rejected such an apology from me. But tell me, Christian! was slavery a good thing among the Israelites or not?

O. B.—I cannot tell.

M.—Not tell whether what your God commanded was good or evil?

O. B.—It was good. The slaves were wicked idolaters, and their masters a chosen people.

M.—And what think you of slavery among your people, the Americans?

O. B.—It is a deadly sin.†

M.—Yet the Africans were wicked idolaters and the Americans a Christian nation. Wherefore, then, is it a deadly sin?

O. B.—Our republic has declared that *all* men are free and equal.

M.—But your Bible declares that some shall be masters and some slaves. "Ye shall take them for an inheritance for your children after you; they shall be your bondsmen *for ever*." He that runs may read. Answer, Christian!

O. B.—I have already told you the command was limited, and cannot sanction negro slavery.

M.—That very answer you refused from me: you *cannot* answer.—Yet again. Your Bible inculcates a belief in witchcraft, and has sanctioned and caused the death of poor, helpless, innocent old women, for a crime which modern knowledge tells us can have no existence.

* My opponent's words, see his last letter, fourth paragraph; *Allah* being substituted for *God*, and *Koran* for *Bible*. The argument (or rather the assertion,) is quite as convenient and conclusive in Constantinople as in New York.

† My opponent, in his last letter, charges it home against the Athenian law-givers that they "permitted to invade and enslave any people deemed fit to be made slaves." If this was a crime in Attica, what was it in Judea?

O. B.—The proof.

M.—It is ready. But yesterday I read the history of your unbelieving nation. 'Tis not a century and a half since, in your New England states, *nineteen* Christians were hanged and one pressed to death—for witchcraft! They were tried by a jury of Christians, before a Christian judge. The wisest men among ye, even the learned Christian priest, Cotton Mather, publicly testified his belief in their guilt, and eagerly urged on their condemnation. Your Bible justified his nursery superstitions. Your Bible expressly sanctioned the legal and cruel mummery. Your Bible sealed the innocent and miserable wretches' doom.

O. B.—You slander our Bible, Mussulman.

M.—I slander it not. It is written: (Exodus, chap. xxii., ver. 18,) "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." If your Bible be true, *there are witches*; and these witches *do justly suffer death*. The Salem trials may have been an outrage on common sense; they were strictly in accordance with your Bible precepts. Cotton Mather may have evinced credulity that would disgrace a child just from the nursery, but he was more of a Bible Christian than you. He believed in the 22nd chapter of Exodus. Do you believe in it, Christian?

O. B.—Witches may have existed then, and may not exist now.

M.—And how were your New England fathers to *guess* that they had ceased to exist? or what authority have you for any such conjecture? Your Bible says not a syllable of it. Your Bible, I repeat it, caused, on the memorable 22nd of September, 1692, an exhibition of stupidity and barbarity unequalled in modern history.* Bismillah!† Praise be to our prophet that my lot is cast in a land of Korans!

Had I professed any acquaintance with the God of nature, or attempted any defence of his imagined government, your arguments addressed to the scripture-rejecting deist, would, in a measure, apply. But you know very well that I have done neither. Let those explain the dispensations of providence who set themselves up as providence's apologists. This I know, that when there is recorded in a Bible or a Koran, or any other book, the murder of fifty thousand heretic women and children, the tale is a *horrible* one; and that when the butchery is said to be approved—to be *commanded*, by a God, the tale is a *dreadfully immoral* one; a precedent of the most frightful description; a most unequivocal, express sanctioning of a degree of licentious brutality, which not even such a sanction can induce the most abandoned of modern wretches to imitate. I challenge you to produce from

* On that day three men and *five women*! were hanged as witches. The Rev. Mr. Noyes presided at the execution; and as soon as the convulsive agonies of the poor wretches ceased, he turned to the multitude and exclaimed: "What a sad thing it is to see eight firebrands of hell hanging there!"—*Salem Witchcraft*, Boston edition, p. 231.

† Thank God.

e Koran,* one single passage that even approaches the immolity of this; one single passage in which the prophet of Mecca ready as he was to use the scimitar argument,) even distantly and indirectly ventures such an outrage on the human reason and the human heart; in which the murderer of Sophyan† dares, I say not to *approve*, but even hesitatingly to *excuse*, such a wholesale massacre as this. You talk of the brutal sensuality, the vile dominations, the horrid and impious rites, the human sacrifices, that disgraced Canaan. I challenge you, sir, to produce the faintest shadow of proof, that all the conjectured enormities committed for centuries among the Canaanites matched this one of bra-barbarity of the Jews. Cite to me only one instance of brutal sensuality like theirs who forcibly possessed themselves of thirty-two thousand young virgins, after having first murdered their mothers and their infant brothers before their eyes! Relate to me only one vile abomination like this monstrous compound of slaughter and lust. Adduce only one horrid and impious rite that will compare with that superintended by the Hebrew prophet; or only one human sacrifice, like the offering up of fifty thousand women and children, on a single field of blood, to the Jehovah of Israel!

But one! I ask but ONE! and then you may talk to me, if you will, of the knowledge and the light that succeeded to pagan darkness—of the sublimity, and glory, and mercy of that religion that replaced the idolatry of Canaan!

“The sword” (you see fit to remind us,) “went through the land, and cleansed its pollutions with the blood of its inhabitants. Their high places of idolatry were destroyed, their altars were overthrown, their pillars broken down, their groves burnt with fire, and their graven images hewn in pieces.” And in all this, you think, there is cause for infinite congratulation! Let me ask you, sir, if modern missionaries were to imitate this savage intolerance, what the world would say of them? The poor martyrs of Juggernaut are sunk as low, surely, as ever were the

* If you do not happen to possess a copy, I have one at your service.

† Mahomet commanded Abdo'llah secretly to assassinate Sophyan the son of Khade, his bitterest enemy, and gave the assassin his walking cane in token of his friendship. This murder is one of the blackest stains on Mahomet's character.—*Gagnier, Vie de Mahomet*, vol. i., p. 374.

And it is but a poor excuse for the Arabian prophet, (though an excellent reason why Christians should view his crime with especial charity,) that the man after God's own heart has a yet blacker one to answer for: 2 Samuel, chap. xi., ver. 15: though, to my mind, even such duplicity and cruelty towards Uriah is cast into the shade by the deliberate, cold-blooded spirit of avenging revenge which could dictate (*even on a death-bed!*) to his son, the miserable subterfuge by which the father's promise of protection was to be retracted, and his unforgiven enemy to be murdered in his old age. 1 Kings, chap. ii., ver. 8—10. His last dying words breathed of hatred and blood. Strange! strange and melancholy! that men should set up characters so easy to the gentler virtues as these, and fall down and worship them, as right examples to the inhabitants of earth, and chosen prophets or selected favourites of the sovereign of heaven!

Canaanites; and, without intending any very flattering compliment to you and your fellow-Christians, I may place you at least as high in the scale of humanity as the Jews in Moses' time. What think you, then, of arming against the Asiatic idolaters, whose heart God has hardened against missionary preaching? What think you of cleansing their pollutions with their blood, of overthrowing their altars, of hewing their great idol to pieces, of murdering their women and boys, fifty thousand at a time, and taking their girls for yourselves? You shrink, almost as from an insult, at the bare supposition? I doubt it not. Yet it is your heart alone that revolts from the atrocity; your Bible countenances it. It is the spirit of progressive improvement that denounces and neutralises the spirit of the Old Testament.

You attempt to defend the gratuitous obscenities of the scriptures by attacking my opinions on morals. This, sir, permit me to remind you, is no defence whatever. If I were a Nero or Caligula, that could have nothing to do with the question. The obscenities would not change their character on that account. But I evade not, rest assured, the implied accusation. The public have my opinions on marriage,* my remarks on placements,† and my "Moral Physiology"‡ before them; I request them either to suspend judgment, or do me the justice to read these; and when they have read them, I appeal to their better feelings in support of the assertion I here make, that the language employed is free even from the slightest taint of indecency, and that I have not advanced a single sentiment throughout, which I have not adduced sufficient reason for believing to be eminently conducive to the increase of unaffected chastity and rational virtue.

You have succeeded in proving that the sages of antiquity were imperfect mortals like ourselves,§ and that we have made in some respects considerable advance since their days. This

* See my letter to the editor of the Boston Trumpet, republished as Note A in the Appendix to this volume.

† See, for the article referred to, Note B in the Appendix.

‡ You told me, a few days since, that you had never read this work. The public, I trust, will not imitate you in thus judging first and reading afterwards. Nor do they seem inclined so to do. Already, within seven months from its first appearance, the *fifth* edition is called for; which I am now (July, 1831,) engaged in revising for the press.

§ Nevertheless I must call upon you for your authority for the stories about *Socrates'* wife and his impure amours. I never heard of them before. *Lempriere*, who is classical authority, says not a word of them, but quotes *Socrates* as "an unparalleled example of an affectionate husband."

That our readers may not impute to *Lycurgus* and his biographer *Plutarch*, a degree of licentiousness which was altogether foreign to Spartan manners, I beg them to read the whole passage, as given in *Plutarch's Lives*, article, *Lycurgus*, vol. i., p. 80; Philadelphia edition.

With *Cicero*, when he says he could more easily tell what he did *not* think than what he *did* think, regarding the nature of God, I sympathise and agree. He was wiser than our modern theologians.

Callicratides said nothing more than is openly said by a vicious but omnipotent public opinion, at the present day.

is an excellent argument in proof that the world is progressively improving, but no argument at all in proof of the necessity of revelation. Man was ignorant previous to experience; he is daily acquiring experience, and becoming wiser in consequence.

And here I am constrained to conclude, without enlarging, as I intended, on this latter argument, and without having found opportunity to speak of the French Revolution.

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

LETTER IV.

New-York, July 23, 1831.

SIR,

I laid it down in my last letter as a fundamental principle, that the great arbiter of life and death had a perfect right to say when and how the lives of his creatures should be disposed of, and that he could with as much propriety employ the sword for the chastisement of a nation, as the earthquake, or famine, or pestilence, or any other natural means. On this ground I contended, that the extermination of the nations of Canaan by the Israelites, if commanded by God, (which is the very question in dispute,) would be altogether proper, and perfectly in unison with his other operations on the vast scale of divine providence. At the same time I admitted, that this very extermination would have been murder, if uncommanded by him. Consequently it follows, that no justification of a similar course towards *other* nations not specified, could be drawn from that special commission, even by the Jews, and therefore certainly not by others. This furnishes an answer to the plea of the followers of Mahomet for their wars, and would be a sufficient reply to the "missionaries," should they propose a crusade against the heathen. And although the former *pretend* that Allah commanded theirs, it should be remembered that pretending and proving are two things. Wherefore, all that long dialogue in my opponent's last letter goes for just nothing at all. That the *Israelites* were commanded by God to do as *they* did, is one object of this discussion to show. But they were *not* commanded, Deuteronomy, chap. xx., ver. 12, 13, to slaughter *all* the enemies. By reading the two preceding verses, it will be seen, that they were first to offer peace, which, if accepted by those to whom it was offered, was to preserve them from slaughter. But certain cities which the Israelites were themselves to inhabit, were to be utterly destroyed, that they might not be contaminated with the infernal abominations of their

heathen inhabitants; to which contamination they would have been exposed, had they intermingled with them. Why God does not now command a similar course in relation to the heathen of this day, he best knows. For aught that we finite creatures know to the contrary, he sees good reasons, under existing circumstances, for adopting a different method. This much however I would say: that the cruel and abominable rites of the heathen—their infanticide, their cannibalism, their human sacrifices, and their obscenities and impurities, ought not to be *tolerated* by their *rulers*; and that, if any cause under heaven, without the express command of God, would justify the interference of one nation with the internal concerns of another, Christendom would be justified in sending her legions to the East, and terminating those vile and accursed practices by force. That the Israelites, therefore, did not tolerate the barbarous rites of the Canaanites when they took possession of the country, is a circumstance altogether in their favour. And as to the *servitude*, and the *everlasting* servitude of the *Canaanites*, this is no argument for the *slavery* of the *Africans* a *day* or a *moment*. It is no reason that we should enslave Africans, because God saw fit to direct the Jews, under their peculiar circumstances, to make the Canaanites their servants. Nor is the *mere record* of this or any other fact in history, any reason for its imitation. With regard to witchcraft I would say, that no *witch* ought to live. Now, sir, prove that the Salem sufferers were witches, and I stand ready to justify the course pursued toward them. But if they were not witches, then there was no sanction in the *Bible* for their execution, even on the supposition that this *Jewish* law is obligatory on us, which would remain to be considered; for that does not say, Thou shalt not suffer an *imaginary* witch to live. But, by the way, please to inform me what branch of modern *knowledge* tells us, that witchcraft can have no existence; for I must confess that I believe in the 22nd chapter of Exodus, as fully as ever Cotton Mather did. I have no notion of conceding one half the *Bible* for the sake of defending the other. I believe there were witches and demoniacs in Bible days, whether there are any now or not.

It is truly comical to see how some men attempt to avoid difficulties by non-committal. Propose a subject for consideration, and up they jump upon the fence, leaving the opposing sides to contest it as they can; and prepared to jump whithersoever victory inclines. The interests of a world, yea, the eternal destiny of our race, may hang suspended on its decision; it troubles not them. For aught they care, it may go undecided. They, prudent souls, are not going to venture themselves where the bullets fly, and the bayonets gleam, and the swords brandish. Not they. They leave others to fight the battle; and when the one side gets pushed, O! they don't *belong* to that side. Should the tide turn, and the other side

get pushed, why, they don't belong to *that* side. And when the conflict is o'er, and the victory won, with the greatest self-complacency in the world they exclaim, We are not of the defeated party. No, nor of the victorious one either, it might be answered. They had not the courage to enter the lists at all. And less honourable is their course, than that of either of the belligerent parties. The latter contend for important objects, and, defeated or victorious, manifest therein a becoming interest. Whereas, they of the fence would sooner see heaven and earth come together, than not escape with whole skins. This, sir, is precisely the case of the individual who perches himself upon the *moral* fence between theism and atheism. Let the theist press him with the absurdities of atheism, and he will instantly reply, *I am not an atheist*. Let the atheist then assail him, and he as readily answers, *I am not a theist*. Well, sir, be nothing then and welcome, and for once take the consequences; for, know thou assuredly, that 'tis the most indefensible of all positions. The man that takes his station between two armies, runs the risk of getting peppered by both. Prepare then, sir, for the fate merited by all fence men, and stand, if thou canst, the cross-fire of Christianity and atheism.

The fence man says, he believes no way. Well, then, he does not believe the truth; for there is a God, or there is not. He therefore is in fault in believing no way; for he *ought* to believe the *truth* in so important and *practical* a case as *this*, whether he has any belief in relation to *lunar monsters* or not. Nor does he merely *do wrong* in forbearing to believe, but he acts very *unreasonably*. It is not supposable, that, in a case like the one before us, the evidences on each side are equal, or that there are no evidences. If the universe was created by God, it does of course exhibit traces of transcendent wisdom; if uncreated, no such traces. It is therefore but for a man to open his eyes, to be able to form an opinion the one way or the other; and surely he who will not do this, is but poorly entitled to the name of a free inquirer, or a reasonable man. Besides, he certainly cannot be the loser by taking sides; for there is no possibility of his being right where he is. This he knows, and is therefore inexcusable for remaining there. Whereas, by changing his position, he would stand some chance of becoming right. He would take one step toward it at least, in that he would then begin to exercise his reason. So much for the *peculiar* difficulties of the man of the fence. But he is not to be let off with this: for he has the burthen both of theism and atheism to bear besides. He says he does not deny a God, that is, a finite one. Very well. Then he does not deny the absurdity of the existence of a being able to roll the wheels of nature, but unable to kill a flea! Then he does not deny the propriety of the destruction of cities by the God of the earthquake and the volcano; and consequently gets involved, after all, in the dilemma of the deist, which he fain would avoid. Take

we him next on another tack. He does not, he says, deny atheism. Well then, he does not deny its absurdities: viz., that the wheels of nature roll themselves; that all possible appearances of intelligence are produced by non-intelligence; that men, and animals, and vegetables, make themselves; and that the world is eternal, contrary to demonstration. In fine, he has to father all the difficulties of theism, all the absurdities of atheism, and all the *nonsense* of nothingarianism. If he is satisfied with his position, let him keep his station; but let him not think to escape the *deist's* dilemma, in objecting to the God of the Bible and *not* to the God of nature.

Now, sir, it is not to be taken for granted that the wars of the Israelites were wrong. It must first be proved, that the God who destroys cities by the convulsions of nature, did not command those wars. Leaving therefore these wars out of the account till this is proved, I ask seriously if the condition of Palestine was not incalculably improved by its change of masters. Was it not an improvement to stop human sacrifices? to abolish idolatry? to check sodomy? to overthrow all manner of cruelties and impurities? Suppose the Jews themselves occasionally fell into some of those very sins. Still, when they did so, God punished them, and they repented and reformed. Surely this was far, far preferable to keeping on in those abominable courses, as the Canaanites did.

I have not yet admitted that the Bible is obscene. When the Old Testament was written, many things which appear obscene to us, were by no means so considered in those days of primitive simplicity. But really, that an individual who in this refined age scouts marriage, recommends the keeping of mistresses, (for what else is placement?) and publishes the means of avoiding the natural consequence of sexual intercourse, should affect to have his *modesty* put to the blush by the artless and primitive style of the Bible, is distressing in the extreme. I had not indeed read "*Moral Physiology*" *in course* when I wrote my last letter; but I had seen it, and had noticed therein what I consider demoralizing and obscene. Since then, I have examined it more, and I pronounce it without hesitation to be one of the most abominable works of the day. It is not necessary to read it through, to see whether it is so or not. A few passages would be sufficient to show this, and to put the community, but especially females who have any regard for their reputation, on their guard against it. And yet, the individual who sends such trash into the world, can make up a terrible face at the ancient simplicity of the Bible!

It is conceded, I perceive, that we are, in *some* respects, *considerably* in advance of the nations of antiquity in point of wisdom and improvement. Cold admission indeed, and yet an important one. Now, sir, please to explain the cause of the *continuance* of those nations that have not the Bible, in a state of heathen barbarism down to this day. *They have not made*

these improvements. *They are not* in advance of ancient heathen nations in these respects. Look at the most enlightened of them—the Hindoos and the Chinese. In Hindostan, they have three hundred and thirty millions of Gods. There, they burn or bury their widows alive, destroy their infants, particularly their illegitimate ones, of which ten thousand a month are said to be thus murdered in Bengal alone,) immerse the sick and the dying in the Ganges, suspend themselves on hooks pierced through their flesh, and sacrifice themselves to Juggernaut. Their *general characteristics* are, falsehood, pride, tyranny, theft, deceit, conjugal infidelity, disobedience to parents, ingratitude, (they having no word expressive of thanks,) a litigious spirit, perjury, treachery, covetousness, gaming, servility, hatred, vengeance, cruelty, private murder, and want of compassion to the poor, the aged, the sick, and the dying. In China, all ranks, the emperor not excepted, worship a host of imaginary spirits, that are supposed to preside over the seasons, mountains, rivers, &c. They believe in the transmigration of souls. They are offended with their gods, when events are unfavourable. Their general character is that of fraud, falsehood, and hypocrisy. Here, too, infants are exposed to perish, nine thousand of which are computed to be annually destroyed at Pekin. So much for the light nature, and the progress of moral improvement without revelation. And shall we be gravely told in the face of all these facts, that revelation is unnecessary? Sir, *some* infidels have more honour than this. Some infidels acknowledge the necessity of revelation, and acknowledge too, that Christianity has been of incalculable benefit to mankind. We find a Rousseau admitting, as I have heretofore shown, that “philosophy can do nothing good which religion does not do still better; and that religion does many good things which philosophy cannot do at all.” Likewise, that modern philosophers are indebted to Christianity for their best ideas. We find a Herbert admitting, that Christianity is the best religion; a Hobbes, that the Scriptures are the voice of God; a Shaftesbury, that Christianity ought to be more highly prized, and that he who denies a God sets up an opposition against the well-being of society; a Collins, that Christianity ought to be respected; a Woolston, that Jesus is worthy of glory for ever; a Tindal, that pure Christianity is a most perfect religion, and that all the doctrines of Christianity plainly speak themselves to be the will of an infinitely wise and holy God; a Chubb, that Christ’s mission was *probably* divine, that he was sent into the world to communicate to mankind the will of God, and that the New Testament contains excellent cautions and instructions for our right conduct, and yields much clearer light than any other traditional revelation; and a Bolingbroke, that such moral perfections are in God as Christians ascribe to him, that he will not presume to deny that there have been particular providences, that Christianity is a republication of the religion of nature, and that its morals are pure. We likewise

find the wisest of the heathen philosophers deploring their ignorance and darkness, and acknowledging their necessity of divine illumination.

Respecting the case of Socrates, for the truth of which my opponent has called, I extract the following from Halyburton's Inquiry, pp. 131, 146, "Aristotle practised unnatural lust, and Socrates is foully belied if he loved not the same vice. Whence else could *Socratici Cinædi* come to be a proverb in Juvenal's days?" "He is frequently introduced by Plato as swearing. He is known to have basely complied with the way of worship followed by his own country, which was the more impious, that it is to be supposed to be against the persuasion of his own conscience. Yea, we find him with his last breath ordering his friend to sacrifice the cock he had vowed to Esculapius. M. Dacier's apology for him is perfectly impertinent. He is accused of impure amours with Alcibiades, and of prostituting his wife's chastity for gain." Again, p. 314, "Plato tells us how devout Socrates was in the worship of the sun, and that several times he fell into an ecstasy while thus employed."

As to the case of Lycurgus and Plutarch, I see not how my opponent has bettered it, by the allusion to the article to which he refers us. It shows that they approved of the most shameful and open adultery, and of the most cruel destruction of weak and sickly infants.

In the case of Cicero, he finds it very convenient to pass over his approbation of revenge and suicide. Will he tell us whether he "sympathises and agrees with him in" these, as well as in scepticism; and whether that philosopher was wiser in these respects "than modern theologians?"

His comparison of the opinion of Calicratides with modern public opinion, touching the privileged irregularities of husbands, is an evasion of the subject. We are not discussing the merits of public opinion, but of the Bible. He must not expect, in this discussion, to make the Bible accountable for the opinion of an ungodly world, who do not make it their directory, as he sometimes undertakes to do, though most absurdly, in relation to their practice.

In the case of the philosophers just noticed, as well as in that of all heathen philosophers, ancient and modern, we see what the wisest of men are without the Bible, and what those very infidels who decry it *would* be without it—if, indeed, they would be in so good a condition, which but few, if any of them, would be, inasmuch as they are in general no Socrateses. And are they not discriminating geniuses indeed, to pronounce a book unnecessary, and even pernicious, were it not for which, they themselves would this very hour be adoring the sun, and sacrificing cocks, and casting their sickly infants down some deep, dark *Apothetæ*? A high conceit of themselves must they have indeed, to imagine that they are naturally so much wiser than the sages of all generations, that they need no other light than those men have had,

to enable them to do so much better than they. Let them bear in mind the words of Rousseau, that modern philosophers derive their best ideas from Christianity. And, bearing this in mind, let them no longer say that revelation is unnecessary. And will it still be pretended that revelation is unnecessary? Were I an infidel, I would not attempt to maintain a position so manifestly untenable. I would admit its necessity at once, but argue that this did not prove that one had been given.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

TO ORIGEN BACHELER.

LETTER IV.

July 30, 1831.

To our readers, without further argument, I leave the decision, whether you have proved the horrible precedent recorded in Numbers, chap. xxxi., and the express command in Deuteronomy, chap. xii., to be merciful and moral or not; whether that precedent and that command would, or would not, amply justify the most odious intolerance and cruelties to-day; whether the conqueror finds not in the one his permit, and the inquisitor in the other his credentials; whether the belief in witchcraft is, or is not supported; and whether the Salem murders were, or were not, immediately caused, by the law given Exodus, chap. xxii., ver. 18; whether the example of the chosen of God, when acting in accordance with the command of a divine law-giver, be, or be not justification sufficient for the slavery of the south, whether you have adduced from the Koran or from the annals of the Canaanites, one atrocity to match the Midianite massacre; whether the 4th and 16th chapters of Ezekiel, and the 1st and 2nd of Hosea, are, or are not, decent samples of "primitive simplicity;" whether the morals of a nation that sanctions *place-ments* are, or are not, better than those described by Mr. Tappan and his fellow members in the late Report of the Magdalen Society of this city; whether "Moral Physiology" be, or be not, a moral, useful work, written with the most scrupulous regard to propriety, and conducive to genuine chastity and to national cultivation; whether there is one "abominable" sentiment or expression in its seventy-two pages, and, if there were, whether that were the faintest shadow of an apology for the vilifying imaginations that stain the scriptural columns, or whether it has any thing whatever to do with this discussion; whether the spirit of progressive improvement, based on accu-

mulating experience, be, or be not, adequate explanation of the world's progress since the days of old; and, finally, whether such a revelation as that now under consideration be, or be not, likely to aid in bringing about peace, decency, and common sense upon earth, or goodwill and enlightened charity among mankind.

If we are to be continually reverting to our former subject of debate, this discussion will be interminable. It seemed to me, even from the first, almost superfluous to adduce a single reason in support of my undoubted right, when I am uninformed, to say I am; or very learnedly to argue, that when I have not a single fact on which to predicate an assertion, I may be permitted to make no assertions. To *reiterate* the reasons I have given, would be *worse* than superfluous. It is all well enough that you should tell us whatever you please regarding the doings above the stars and the intentions of omnipotence; it is well enough that you should assume to have been admitted, as it were, behind the scenes of the sacred drama, to see its secret springs touched and its millions of actors prompted; but, methinks, it is carrying the jest somewhat too far, to insist upon my being equally presumptuous; and, when I decline to assert what I have no data for asserting, to run on about fences and pivots and non-committal.

In a former letter, you alluded to the excesses committed during the French Revolution, in proof how sanguinary and licentious a world would be without revelation.

No great political event has ever been so grossly—so wilfully misrepresented, as that to which you have referred. Never was a more noble or a more unfortunate struggle to put down tyranny and intolerance and injustice, and to replace them by a republic founded on the rights and liberties of its citizens. Never was there a period when the power of truth and of justice shone more conspicuously than in the first months of that revolution. Never, perhaps, was there a public body at once more daring, more honest, and more moderate, than the National Assembly of 1789; nor ever, probably, did a political party exhibit more sincere devotion to a good cause, than did the brave and ill-fated Girondists.

But times of great excitement are unfavourable to sober judgment; and, in default of experience, men are apt from one extreme to run into the opposite. Thus did excesses originate among the French republican party, by which their subtle adversaries were but too ready to profit.

At first, the extravagancies committed by those who had escaped from the thralldom of legitimate oppression were carefully exaggerated into atrocities. Throughout all the other nations of Europe, men's fears were excited, and men's heads were turned.

But a surer expedient yet remained. Emissaries were sent from Great Britain, and from other European courts, to fan the

me of extravagance, and to push the most reckless and violent among the revolutionary democrats to unheard-of acts of injustice and cruelty. Disguised as zealous republicans, these tools of a corrupt aristocracy secretly instigated, and sometimes openly perpetrated, the very atrocities which their masters afterwards held up with well-feigned horror, to the execration of their devoted subjects!

These assertions are not made lightly, nor without sufficient authority. They are made on the authority of one who learnt from the American revolution the value of liberty, and then returned to aid France in a similar attempt; and who has been, eternately and deservedly, the idol of our country and his own. They are made on *the authority of the father of this so much adulated French revolution—of GENERAL LAFAYETTE*. It was my privilege (and a valued privilege I esteemed it,) to hear, from the lips of the venerable patriot himself, a detailed account of that momentous, political convulsion, its occult causes, and the secret conspiracies that finally wrought its failure.

I asked him if aught of religious or irreligious persecution mingled with the democratic excitement of the times.

"None," replied Lafayette: "if the clergy were objects of jealousy or dislike, it was because they sought to arrest the march of the great reform, the more especially as it touched the ecclesiastical privileges and possessions. From the moment the high clergy saw the administration of their benefices transferred to the municipalities, did they become the enemies of young liberty; and as such, not as priests, were they hated or suspected by the people. The working clergy, who often aided the revolutionary movement, escaped the national odium."

In proof of the general's assertion, that to the efforts of secret and foreign emissaries must be traced the worst of those atrocities, I refer our readers to several extracts from an original document*—a letter from an agent of the English minister, Pitt, to some of his creatures in France. It is dated 29th of June, 1793; that is, about a month after the reign of terror commenced. The original is in my possession, and at your service, if you desire to see it. Its authenticity is unquestionable: it was intercepted by the republican party, and afterwards placed in the hands of General Lafayette.

Space permits me not to add more than one other fact, out of the hundreds that have transpired, in corroboration of these (in Europe now commonly received) opinions. I give it on the authority of a Parisian gentleman, M. Phiquepal, who was long and intimately acquainted with M. Pinel, and who related the anecdote to me.

The celebrated Pinel, of Paris, was called, in his capacity of physician, to attend a member of one of the principal revolutionary committees; a man who had distinguished himself as the

* The extracts are published as Note C in the Appendix.

abettor and perpetrator of some of the worst atrocities that stained the annals of that eventful period. The patient eagerly inquired what Pinel thought of his case; requesting, as an act of friendship, that danger, if there were any, might not be concealed from him. Pinel replied by advising him, if he had yet business to arrange, not to delay an hour in settling it. The dying man appeared to be deeply affected with his situation; and Pinel, who had ever been a true and staunch republican, even from the first attack on the Bastile, in which he personally assisted—thought the moment favourable to obtain some insight into the motives that had prompted the chief actors in the revolutionary tragedy. "Sir," he said, addressing his patient, "I would fain ask you a question; but it may be a painful one." "Ask it," replied the other, "my time here is short, and I have nothing that I need conceal now." "Then," resumed Pinel, "I would ask what possible motive you could have had to enact, under the guise of republicanism, the bloody horrors that have ruined our cause." "Your question is easily answered," returned the sick man; "I had a pension of six thousand francs sent to me from England regularly by Louis."

And these are the excesses—these the atrocities that are unhesitatingly charged to freedom or to scepticism! that are cited, in England, as proof positive that republicanism is but another name for anarchy; and in America, as triumphant evidence of what a world would be without religion! The arguments thus obtained, in the one hemisphere in favour of royalty, and in the other of orthodoxy, are equally conclusive.

But have American protestants ever considered how heterodox, after all, is this favourite argument of theirs? What was the religion that, (nominally,) prevailed throughout France previous to the French revolution, and the neglect of which, in 1792-3, shall have caused the *mitrillades** of Lyons, instigated the *noyades*† of Nantes, and erected the guillotines of Arras, of Orange, and of Paris? A religion of truth? Nay, but a damnable heresy, (so have Luther and Calvin expressed it) an invention of lies, a religion of Anti-christ, a fable of the lady of Babylon. And will Luther's or Calvin's followers now argue, that to believe a lie was the salvation of anti-revolutionary France, and that the abandonment of that lie gave birth to the crimes and cruelties of '93? Is Catholicism, as Protestants believe, a delusion of the devil? and did the dissipation of this devilish delusion convert the polite and cultivated Frenchman into a lover of misrule and a delighter in carnage? Was it, in very deed, this so much abused Romish superstition that had alone, for centuries, restrained the turbulent and vicious propen-

* The firing of Cannon, loaded with canister-shot, upon a number of individuals tied together.

† The wholesale drowning of human beings, who were embarked on the Loire in large, flat boats, which were then scuttled and sunk.

ities of the French nation? Strange power of error! Mighty influence for good of a device of the father of evil!

I return from this digression to speak of the subject more immediately under consideration, the influence which Bible creeds have had on the morality of mankind.

I have already adverted to the spirit of fanaticism which led to the Salem tragedy, and which was finally arrested, not by the merciful or enlightening influence of religion, but because the rich, as well as the poor, began to be accused of practices similar to *her's* of Endor. But I have not yet adverted to another foul stain in the history of those days of gospel purity; for such all Christians will admit the times of the pilgrim-fathers to have been. I allude to the inveterate persecution even unto death by those very men who had fled from England in search of mental liberty—of the amiable, inoffensive quakers. In the year 1661 it was, that a law passed the Colonial Court of Massachusetts, to “prevent the intrusions of quakers,” and to “restrain their absurd and blasphemous doctrines.” Their preachers were declared, in the very words of the statute, to be “rogues and vagabonds;” if found without the particular jurisdiction wherein their dwelling was situated, they were adjudged to be “stripped naked from the middle upwards, tied to a cart's tail, and whipped through the town;” for the second offence they were to be “committed unto the house of correction and branded with the letter R. on the left shoulder;” and, if they persisted in their heretical mission, they were to be put to death!*

I marvel not that men who acknowledged the divine authorship of the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy, and who derived their name† from their zealous endeavours to introduce “scripture purity,” should have thought it pious and virtuous to imitate, (though in a very faint and lenient manner) the examples approved by the God of the Bible and recorded by the author of the Pentateuch; but what I do marvel at is, that one advocate should be found, in this nineteenth century, to eulogise—*ay, or to excuse*—a book, of influence so grievously intolerant, and of precedent so lamentably immoral.

The origin of this hydra evil, which turns the very interchange of human opinions to a curse—of this sirocco falsehood, that breathes its withering influence over the world of the heart, drying up all kindly affections, and scorching the fair flowers of peace and love and charity—the true origin of this master-error,

A law had been previously passed, in the year 1658, making vagrant quakerism punishable with death. Both statutes remained in force until repealed, not by the good sense or religious charity of the New Englanders, but by an order from the English king, dated September 9, 1661, putting a stop to all capital or corporeal punishment of his subjects called quakers. It came too late, however, to save the lives of Marmaduke Stevenson, William Robinson, and Mary Dyer, who had received their sentence to be hanged, two years before, (on the 20th of August, 1659,) from Judge Andicott.

* Puritans.

INTOLERANCE, may be traced to the unfounded and mischievous notion, inculcated throughout the gospel pages, *that true belief is a virtue, to be rewarded with heaven; and untrue belief (however sincere) a vice, to be punished with hell.* "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."* (Mark, chap. xvi., ver. 16.)

Now, just belief is often a blessing to be rejoiced over; as we would rejoice over a good constitution, or a powerful brain: it is never a virtue to be praised or glorified. False belief—even the sincerest—is often a misfortune; no sincere belief is a fault.† Belief is not a thing to be cast aside, or changed, or re-assumed at pleasure, like a garment. A man might as rationally command me to add a cubit to my stature as an article to my creed. He might as well bid me glow with heat when the freezing north-wind blows over me, or require me to shiver with cold under the rays of a tropical sun, as to expect me to believe in the absence of conviction, or to doubt when the light of demonstration shines into my mind.

Belief is involuntary; a moral phenomenon similar to the sensation of warmth or of chill over the physical frame; coming

* This expression is attributed to Jesus by his biographer Mark. In the figurative language of the East, it might perhaps be interpreted to mean: "He that attains just knowledge, and acts in accordance with it, will be happy; he that does not will be miserable." Such a sentiment is far more in accordance with the gentle spirit that commonly pervades the sayings recorded of Jesus, than the orthodox reading. But with this I have nothing to do. The Christian world in general, and my friend Mr. Bachelet in particular, are much too orthodox thus to explain away the very corner-stone of their faith. They consider this and all similar passages to declare a true creed to be a praiseworthy virtue, and a false one a punishable vice. The whole superstructure of doctrinal religion would fall, under any other interpretation.

† If it were worth while to adduce, in support of a position so clearly self-evident, the sanction of great names, I might here quote an expression employed by the present lord chancellor of England, (better known and more respected, perhaps, as the HENRY BROUGHAM who so strenuously advocated the cause of popular education in Great Britain.) The expression occurs on page 47 of the inaugural discourse delivered by Brougham on his election as lord rector of the University of Glasgow. The editor of the London Morning Chronicle (in his paper of July 1, 182-) calls it "a beautiful passage," which, "as the discourse was printed at the request of the principal professors and students of the university, is adopted by that learned and highly respectable body." The sentiment thus delivered by the newly-elected lord rector, sanctioned by the university, and lauded by one of the leading London editors, reads as follows: "*The great truth has finally gone forth to all the ends of the earth, that man shall no longer render account to man for belief, over which he has no control. Henceforward, nothing shall prevail upon us to praise or to blame any one for that which he can no more change than he can the hue of his skin or the height of his stature.*"

"It is the more meritorious," adds the editor of the Morning Chronicle, "in Mr. Brougham and the University of Glasgow to adopt so liberal a principle, that the nation in general is, we believe, far from being ripe for it."

They cannot be ripe for it until they are prepared to discard, as a literal and infallible revelation, the book which tells them (John, chap. iii., ver. 18), "He that believeth not is condemned already."

often unsought, and deserting us unrequested. That the inculcates a sentiment diametrically opposed to this most tant truth, is alone evidence sufficient, that it is not of di-
origin.

was unworthy of your cause, and unnecessary to your argu-
to bring up the slanders that have, in every age, been en-
ly circulated against philosophers. Without believing Socra-
nd his compeers perfect, we may be permitted to doubt the
ales that have ever been circulated regarding them, emana-
rom some such source, probably, as "The Clouds" of Aris-
nes.

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

LETTER V.

New-York, August 6, 1831.

The cruelty or justice of the slaughter of the Canaanites
e Israelites, depends, as I have already said, upon the fact,
her that slaughter was or was not commanded by God,
h is the very point in dispute. Nor would a command for
htering them be a license for slaughtering others; and it
d not therefore justify a similar act "to day," nor give
conqueror his permit, or the inquisitor his credentials."
mark somewhat similar have I made in relation to witch-
The command in the Bible for the execution of *real*
ies, is no sanction for the execution of *imaginary* ones.
e then that the Salem sufferers were real witches—and
e, too, that the *local* command to the Jews on this point is
ng on *us*—or cease to charge the Bible with their fate.
don't forget, by the way, to inform me what branch of
rn knowledge proves witchcraft to be impossible. My
ment in relation to the *slavery* of the Canaanites is similar
at relative to their *slaughter*. A command of God to en-
them would apply to them *only*. He might, for aught we
r, see reasons for their being enslaved, which would exist
other case. At any rate, it is no sanction whatever for
slavery of others which he has not commanded. That
mand was local, not general. With regard to the Koran
he Canaanites, 'tis unnecessary to inquire *how much* murder
enjoined and practised. The proper inquiry is, Had they
rity from God? And the *obscurity* of the Bible—I admit
ch thing. It is well known, that, in ancient times, there

was much greater simplicity than at present, and that expressions which shock the ear of modern refinement were then considered altogether proper. Hence we find, in other ancient writings besides the Bible, the same kind of style; and it is therefore treating the latter very unfairly, to object to it on this account. As to "placements," it may be observed, that in a nation where that general system of fornication is practised, there is no chance for *particular* houses of ill-fame; but it is a strange argument, that the nation, *all* of whose habitations are brothels, are more moral than another which has only *special* ones. However, just such an idea of morality is to be expected from the author of "*Moral Physiology*," who thinks that *publication* a moral one. But, at any rate, one would suppose, that such an individual need not have his *modesty* so *excessively* tortured by the honest simplicity of ancient writings. One word as to the progressive moral improvement of man without revelation; and that is, there is no such thing. Wherever Christianity has not been embraced, mankind keep on as bad as they were when that religion first made its appearance on the earth. Yet no sooner is it received in any country, than it puts an *immediate* period to their abominations. But philosophy and infidelity do *not* do this. These *facts* outweigh a thousand fanciful *theories* to the contrary.

If my opponent really wishes to retain his position between theism and atheism, he is welcome so to do. But then he must not expect me to let him alone there, because every controvertist is answerable to his antagonist for the consequences of the position by him assumed. If, to escape the difficulties of theism, he were to embrace atheism, so be it; yet, in doing this, he would have to defend the *absurdities* of atheism. But if he thinks he has nothing to do by being a nothingarian, he does for once mistake. He says he does not affirm or deny a God. Why? Because he sees no evidence on the subject. Then let him open his eyes, and exercise his reason; for 'tis the height of irrationality to suppose, that the evidence will not preponderate the one way or the other, when there is either wisdom immense or none at all concerned in the question. I do not ask him to explore the regions beyond the stars, or to pry into the unrevealed counsels of omniscience. But I ask him to look at himself, and say, if his own frame does not exhibit appearances of perfect wisdom and consummate skill. Or will he say that it exhibits no wisdom, no skill at all? 'Tis the one way or the other, and a fair subject of reasoning too; and, so far from being a *free* inquirer, he is *no* inquirer, unless he will exercise his judgment in so plain and tangible a case. If, however, he will be so unreasonable as to refuse to form an opinion on the subject, let him take the consequences of *that* course. He says he sees no reason for denying a God. Very well, then; if the destruction of cities by earthquakes and volcanoes is no reason for denying the God of nature, neither is the destruction of cities by the sword a

reason for denying the God of the Bible. Let him therefore cease to urge this objection henceforward, while he retains his present position, not forgetting that he has the fooleries of atheism to defend besides. Had not this question a bearing on the present subject of discussion, I should not have introduced it; but it has a most important bearing. Sceptics have yet to learn, that their shafts are aimed at the God of the universe, as well as at the God of Israel, and that downright atheists are the only consistent, thorough-going infidels among them all.

I doubt not, sir, but that there was sufficient cause for a change of government in France at the time of her former as well as her latter revolution. I doubt not but there were abuses in the national church that needed reform. And England, perchance, had there her emissaries to foment disturbances, and instigate excesses. But to attribute the hostility of revolutionists toward *the sovereign of the universe*, to a desire merely to revolutionize their *earthly* government; to explain their violence against *Christianity itself* to be nothing more than an attempt to reform *their church*; to represent the *creatures of Pitt* as having been the authors of the principal atrocities, when those atrocities were committed by the *rulers of France*—by her Robespierre, her Marat, her Danton, and her other bloodhounds of infidelity, and sanctioned by her *National Assembly*, by the *citizens of her capital*, and even by the *French nation*:—this, sir, is rather too great a tax on our credulity, and rather too little a regard to the history of those times.

It is well known that the *writings of infidel philosophers* were the cause of that convulsion, and that their *leading* object was the subversion of religion. "Crush the wretch!" was a favourite expression of Voltaire, their leader, in relation to the Saviour, in his correspondence with his brother infidels. And just before the breaking out of the revolution, the idea of moral obligation was exploded among the infidel clubs throughout France, by which they were prepared for the perpetration of any enormity whatever that would promote their diabolical plans. The great majority of the nation had become infidels, when the sanguinary drama was opened. The following vivid description of that day of infidelity and blood is taken from Horne's *Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures*. For his authority, he refers to the Abbé Barruel's *Memoirs of Jacobinism*, Gifford's *Residence in France during the years 1792-5*, vol. ii., and Adolphus' *History of France*, vol. ii.

"The name and profession of Christianity was renounced by the legislature, and the abolition of the Christian era was proclaimed. Death was declared by an act of the republican government to be an eternal sleep. The existence of the deity and the immortality of the soul were formally disavowed by the National Convention; and the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was declared to have been only preached by superstition for the torment of the living. All the religions in the world

were proclaimed to be the daughters of ignorance and pride, and it was decreed to be the duty of the Convention to assume the honourable office of disseminating atheism (which was blasphemously affirmed to be truth,) over all the world. As a part of this duty, the Convention further decreed, that its express renunciation of all religious worship should, like its invitations to rebellion, be translated into all foreign languages; and it was asserted and received in the Convention, that the adversaries of religion had deserved well of their country. Correspondent with these professions and declarations, were the effects actually produced. Public worship was utterly abolished. The churches were converted into 'temples of reason,' in which atheistic and licentious homilies were substituted for the prescribed service; and an absurd and licentious imitation of the pagan mythology was exhibited, under the title of the 'religion of reason.' In the principal church in every town, a tutelary goddess was installed, with a ceremony equally pedantic, frivolous, and profane; and the females selected to personify this new divinity were mostly prostitutes, who received the adorations of the attendant municipal officers, and of the multitudes whom fear, or force, or motives of gain, had collected together on the occasion. *Contempt* for religion or decency became the test of attachment to the government, and the gross infraction of any social or moral duty was deemed a proof of civism, and a victory over prejudice. All distinctions of right and wrong were confounded. The grossest debauchery triumphed. Then proscription followed upon proscription; tragedy followed after tragedy, in almost breathless succession, on the theatre of France; almost the whole nation was converted into a horde of assassins. Democracy" (not *American* democracy,) "and atheism, hand in hand, desolated the country, and converted it into one vast field of rapine and of blood.' The moral and social ties were unloosed, or rather torn asunder. For a man to accuse his own father, was declared to be an act of civism worthy of a true republican; and to neglect it was pronounced to be a crime that should be punished with death. Accordingly, women denounced their husbands, and mothers their sons, as bad citizens and traitors; while many women—not of the dress of the common people, nor of infamous reputation, but respectable in character and appearance—seized with savage ferocity between their teeth the mangled limbs of their murdered countrymen. France during this period was a theatre of crimes which, after all preceding perpetrations, have excited in the minds of every spectator amazement and horror. The miseries suffered by that single nation have changed all the histories of the preceding sufferings of mankind into idle tales, and have been enhanced and multiplied without a precedent, without a number, and without a name. The kingdom appeared to be changed into one great prison; the inhabitants into felons; and the common doom of man commuted for the violence of the

sword and bayonet, the sucking boat and the guillotine. To contemplative men, it seemed for a season as if the knell of the whole nation was tolled, and the world summoned to its execution and its funeral. Within the short time of ten years, not less than three millions of human beings are supposed to have perished in that single country by the influence of atheism."

This, then, was "the noble struggle to put down tyranny!" this the "period when the power of truth and of justice shone so conspicuously!" And was Lafayette in very deed the father of a tragedy like this? Not he. I will not libel him by an admission of the charge. No, sir. He was not even for *subverting French monarchy*, but only for *reform*. He the father of such an infernal rebellion against heaven and earth? Nay; he could not even *ride* the whirlwind and *direct* the storm, but was himself compelled to flee his country to preserve his life. And was there in all this no hostility to religion? What then *would* have been so? Was it no religious persecution for these myrmidons of hell to commit what Mirabeau himself declared in a similar case to be robbery, by confiscating the legal property of the church? to compel the clergy to subscribe a creed made by an infidel National Convention, or relinquish their means of subsistence? The working clergy escape indeed! Yes! such "workies" as Talleyrand & Co., who were ready to sign any creed, and swear fealty to any government, to retain their places. Such of the clergy it seems escaped the national odium, and that too for the very thing for which they ought to have received it. From such hypocritic demagogues may God in his infinite mercy preserve the American church and nation. But will it seriously be pretended, that there was no conspiracy against religion, when the very doctrines of Christianity, and even Christianity itself, were proscribed? when public worship was abolished, and the churches converted into temples of atheism? nay, when *all the religions in the world* were proclaimed to be the daughters of ignorance and pride, and when the very existence of the deity was formally disavowed by the National Convention? A strange church *reform* this! Sir, I am astonished to witness such a disregard to fact, to screen French infidelity. Far be it from me to attempt to excuse the corruptions of the church of Rome. I admit that church, without hesitation, to be the very Babylon of the Apocalypse. But *as it is*, it is order and excellence, compared with infidel anarchy and misrule. Nay, the fabled hells of the heathen had a comparatively salutary effect on the multitude, and held the world together. Nor is the crudest creed of the wildest horde that roams the desert, a hundredth part so injurious to the interests of mankind, as is the sceptic's *rejection* of revelation. *One sentiment only* is more pernicious: 'tis that which makes *the Bible* the *encourager* of crimes that hurry us hence, by sending us the sooner to heaven! No! sir; enough, enough have we seen of the reign of infidelity, not to wish its re-installment. We have

seen what a nation is, not *without* revelation, but *against* it. One such experiment is enough, quite enough, to make Christendom most solemnly pause, ere they try another. They will need something more than dreaming speculation, and reckless denial of facts notorious the world over, to induce them, after this, to rebel against the government above. They have learnt, that however God may comparatively wink at the *ignorance* of the *heathen*, the nations of *Christendom* are not to *extinguish* the *light of revelation* to them vouchsafed, with impunity. They have learnt, that revelation is *extremely* necessary for *them*, now that they *have* it, both in point of interest and obligation.

Before noticing what my opponent says touching the persecution of the quakers by the puritans, I will just bring into view his assertions relative to belief. He says no sincere belief is a fault; that it is not to be cast aside, or changed, or resumed at pleasure; that we can as well add a cubit to our stature, as an article to our creed; that it is involuntary, coming to us unsought, and deserting us unrequested. All this he says to excuse his scepticism, and fault the Bible for requiring belief in that. Now let us apply this rule to the case of the puritans. Their *belief* that the Salem sufferers were witches, and that they ought to execute them, and whip and banish and hang the quakers, "was not a fault. It was involuntary, coming to them unsought." Nor should he marvel, that an advocate of the Bible can be found in the nineteenth century. This advocate *believes* the Bible; and his "belief is not to be cast aside at pleasure; it is involuntary, coming to him unsought." But men will of course *act* according to their belief. Why then does my opponent denounce the puritans for acting according to theirs? Nay, how is the Bible itself pernicious, if "no belief can destroy the influence of the light within?" How admirable is consistency! and with what facility do the abettors of error slide from position to position for the time being!—I will add, before leaving this point, that Christendom in the days of the puritans had but just emerged from the darkness of the anti-Christian apostacy, and that all parties partook more or less of the intolerant spirit of the age;—and, what is more, that the Bible does no where enjoin the persecution of quakers, and therefore, that it makes nothing against that book, though that persecution was ever so blameworthy on the part of the puritans. And I will further add, that I shall prefer the Bible and my own consciousness, before the theory of Brougham, or any other man.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

TO ORIGEN BACHELER.

LETTER V.

August 13, 1831.

have already selected, at hazard, one or two frightful
 ens of the morality inculcated, by precept and example,
 Old Testament. I might have culled, almost from every
 r of the Pentateuch, similar samples.

upport of the principle involved in the *particular* massacre
 Midianites, we have *general* commands enough regarding
 olaters; such as Deuteronomy, chap. xx., ver. 16;*
 vii., ver. 2; chap. vii., ver. 22, 23, 24;† with a host of others,
 ing such as declare heresy to merit instant death, in any
 few or stranger; for example, Deuteronomy, chap. xiii.,
 to 10, and 12 to 15; also chap. xvii., ver. 2: commands
 ly in unison with the spirit manifested by God himself,
 s, chap. xxxii., ver. 10, until pacified by Moses, ver. 11 to
 also, according to Joshua, who takes pains to inform the
 (Joshua, chap. xxiv., ver. 19, 20,) that the Lord is "a
 s God," who, "if they forsake the Lord and serve strange
 will turn and do them hurt, and consume them, after he
 one them good."

Moses' God sanctions not public and general massacres
 he commands also cowardly, secret assassination;
 s, chap. iii., ver. 15 to 22: and approves it, Judges,
 v., ver. 24, 25, 26. Furthermore, he enjoins deceit, or
 we should call *swindling*, Exodus, chap. xii., ver. 35, 36;
 ys a lying spirit, 2 Chronicles, chap. xviii., ver. 20, 21,
 rewards lying, Genesis, chap. xxvii., ver. 19, and
 xxviii., ver. 13, 14, 15; also Genesis, chap. xxvi.,
 12; protects hypocrisy and punishes integrity, Genesis,
 xx., ver. 1 to 18. He commands that sons be punished,
 at times with death, for sins or omissions of their
 s: Genesis, chap. xvii., ver. 14; and again, Deuteronomy,

Have nothing alive that breatheth!" Where is the command, in any
 religion upon earth, to match this?

e only scruple regarding utter and immediate annihilation is, "*Left
 sts of the field increase upon thee!*" What unheard-of desolation
 e very idea call up!

are told, doubtless, (Numbers, chap. xxxiii., ver. 19,) that "God
 man that he should lie;" but this is only adding inconsistency to

are told again, (Ezekiel, chap. xviii., ver. 20,) that "the son shall
 ur the iniquity of the father;" presumptive evidence, perhaps, that
 no sentiment in the Scriptures so unjust, but we may find, in some
 ext, its very opposite.

chap. xxiii., ver. 2 :* and he himself plagues the Israelites with a three years' famine, until they act up to the spirit of such wretched barbarity, by hanging seven innocent men, for their father's misdeeds; (2 Samuel, chap. xxi., ver. 1 to 14.†) He descends to the dictation of the most childish useless laws, (against wearing linsey-wolsey, &c.,) Deuteronomy, chap. xxii., ver. 5, 9, 10, 11, 12; of the most whimsical rhapsodies, Song of Solomon, chap. viii., ver. 8, 9, 10; or Ezekiel, chap. xiii., ver. 17 to 21;‡ and himself acts a part which is only redeemed from the imputation of childishness by its reckless inhumanity and extravagant injustice; slaying (2 Samuel, chap. xxiv., ver. 1 to 25,) seventy thousand guiltless men, *because David (at the moving of the Lord!§) saw fit to order a census of the people!* He dictates a law (Deuteronomy, chap. xxii., ver. 13 to 21,) in perusing which one knows not which most to marvel at, the brutal spirit of tyrannical suspicion, the outrageous disregard of the commonest decency, or the utter ignorance of physiological facts, it displays; a law so revolting to any one but a jealous savage, that at this moment it is, I believe, no where to be found, except among a few of the Tartar hordes, or in some of the very rudest provinces in the distant interior of Russia.¶ He ordains a test of jealousy (Numbers, chap. v., ver. 14 to 30,) that overtops all the absurd trials by combat, by fire, or by water, that ever disgraced the dark ages. But why enumerate particulars? The whole story is of a similar stamp; and

* Strange! that Solomon, (the son of Bathsheba,) should have been admitted into his own temple! But then, he was the son of a king; and that circumstance (the text, Acts, chap. x., ver. 34, to the contrary notwithstanding,) might have made a difference.

† They hanged two sons of Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, and five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul; "*and after that, God was intreated for the land!*" What a Moloch is this Jehovah of the Pentateuch!

‡ An omnipotent creator of the universe promulgating decrees regarding "sewing pillows to arm-holes," and "making 'kerchiefs to hunt souls'" Alas! for common sense!

§ So we have it, 2 Samuel, chap. xxiv., ver. 1; but at 1 Chronicles, chap. xxi., where the very same transaction is recorded, it is *Satan*, not *God*, who is named as the instigator. Are the terms synonymous? Is God Satan? Is Satan God? So, from collating both texts, we must needs conclude, unless one or other be false. The former seems to me the more orthodox version, and alone in conformity with the text, Isaiah, chap. xlv., ver. 7; and with that, Amos, chap. iii., ver. 6, where the question asked, "Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?" expressly implies that all evil originates, not in the devil, but in the deity.

One might prove, by the way, from a comparison of the two texts, doctrines quite as marvellous as that of the trinity, viz.: that *three is equal to seven*; (compare 2 Samuel, chap. xxiv., ver. 13, with 1 Chronicles, chap. xxi., ver. 12,) as also, that one million one hundred thousand is equal to eight hundred thousand; (compare 2 Samuel, chap. xxiv., ver. 9, with 1 Chronicles, chap. xxi., ver. 5,) or else, as I said before, that one or other of the texts is positively untrue.

¶ See "*Voyage en Sibérie en l'an 1761*," by the Abbé Chappe D'Auteroche, vol. i., p. 166; where our readers will find a curious story "*d'un mariage interrompu*."

exhibit its character one would be compelled to quote it

now, what is the reply to him who adduces these specimens of Scripture morality? How are we met, when we thus turn to the Bible, examples of the grossest vice, laws of the most odious tendency, precedents of the worst influence, all sanctioned, or commanded by the deity? How are we to answer? Why thus: "Slaughter for heresy is justifiable, if commanded by God. A command to the Jews is not a command to us. It was virtuous formerly to slay nations of idolaters, but it is now vicious to slay a single idolater to-day." Was ever so paltry? excuse so lame? Is God changeable? Are we to approve now what God approved then? And what we approve, are we not to imitate? If conduct dictated by God himself be not worthy of all imitation, what conduct is it of it? If these deeds are not recorded as an example that we may follow the steps of a God-directed nation, to what purpose are they recorded? Either such conduct was, in itself, right, or it was wrong. If wrong, the record is false which represents a God of goodness enjoining, approving, or rewarding it, it *ought* to be universally imitated to-day. Virtue ought not to change its nature in four thousand or four million years.

If the slaughter of women and children because of their fathers' sins, if secret assassination, if deceit, if lying, if hypocrisy, if punishing sons for the sins of fathers, and a whole nation for the sins of a king—if puerile fancies, if savage tests of virginity, if jealousy—in a word, if all, or any of the follies, barbaric and atrocious for which I have above quoted chapter and verse, the Bible ENCOURAGES VICE, by precept, by example. *Men will be vicious so long as they act in the spirit of the Bible.* They can be virtuous, only by refusing to imitate what the Bible represents as God approved.

To deny this, is to deny that *any* precept given to the Jews is binding on us. It is to deny that there is, for us, any law in the decalogue, to refrain from murder, from stealing, from adultery, from Sabbath-breaking, from bearing false witness, from covetousness. To deny this, is to deny that the ten commandments are, in virtue of the record, of any authority for the present or future of the world. To deny this, is to deny that any precept, any example, any precedent whatever, recorded from the beginning of *Genesis* to the "Amen" of *Revelations*, is of any binding force on us, or of the slightest obligation on us. It is to constitute man a judge what he will imitate, and what he will not imitate, among divinely approved examples;

say our readers, to take their Bibles in their hands, and dispassionately and deliberately to peruse the passages here quoted, with the whole con-

"It would surely be enough to open men's eyes" (a friend once said) "if the Bible were but printed large enough, and exhibited to view at every street-corner throughout the land." Truly, I have often so.

which he will obey and which he will disobey, of God's express commands. It is setting aside the Bible, to make way for common sense and decent feeling.

No. Do not flatter yourself with any hope of escape here. There is none. Defend your God's commands as virtuous and worthy of imitation, if in common decency you can. If you cannot, then confess, that they are the reverse: confess, that to set them up as examples before us is to seduce us to vice: confess, that the Bible tempts to immorality—that *its influence is positively, undoubtedly vicious.*

The conqueror, the inquisitor, the slave-holder, the witch-hanger* are not *excused*, not *permitted* only, to act their respective parts: they are *commanded* thereto, (if the scripture be inspired) either directly by divine precepts, or tacitly by God-approved and Bible-recorded examples.

"But," will my opponent urge, "if these really are God's commands, if historical evidence proves them to have been so."—To this *if* I reply, that the evidence is two thousand, four thousand, six thousand years old. It has descended to us through tens, almost hundreds of generations. The record containing it has been lost and found again; has been preserved and interpreted from time immemorial by those whose interest it glaringly was to keep up the notion of its infallibility; finally, it has been translated by fallible men. No such evidence can prove the infallibility even of the most reasonable, and natural, and easily comprehended thing. *Infallible proof must come to us through an infallible channel.* Now this channel is not fallible only, it is in the highest degree suspicious. And that which it is adduced to prove is not only not reasonable, not natural, not easily comprehended; it is (to our human reason) inconsistent, contradictory, miraculous, incomprehensible. It is so utterly improbable (not to speak of its impossibility), that a rational being would suspect his very senses of hallucination if they testified to its reality. And such incredible mysteries it is that we are bid implicitly to believe, on the evidence of obscure Eastern legends, some thousands of years old!

What I have written on the subject of marriage and placement, I have written: and our readers can peruse it in the Appendix. They, not you or I, are the judges whether the

* You seem anxious to obtain an answer to the question: "What branch of modern knowledge proves witchcraft to be impossible?" None with which I am acquainted. Can you tell me, in return, what branch of modern knowledge informs us that the inhabitants of Saturn do *not* walk on their heads?

Had we lived in the days of Cotton Mather, I should have asked you for proof of the existence of witches. But in the nineteenth century, this is unnecessary. We need not fight windmills.

The Bible authorizes *indictments for witchcraft*. It is, of course, for the judge and jury to decide whether or not the accused be guilty. But *the very indictment* is the folly of which I complain; a folly now seen to be as glaring, that public opinion utterly scouts, even though the Pentateuch sanctions it.

house of the Haytian President and the houses of the most respectable portion of his fellow-citizens be or be not brothels, and whether Moral Physiology be or be not of beneficial influence. They too must judge for themselves (and this alone appertains to the present discussion) whether such chapters as the 16th and 23rd of Ezekiel, and fifty others of a similar stamp, are characterized by simplicity or obscenity; and also (this question my opponent forgot to answer) whether they would choose to read such simple passages aloud to their sisters or daughters; ay! or to their sons or brothers; for I never could understand why men should not be as regardful of dignified propriety in the company of their own sex as of the other.

When you adduce some proof in support of your assertion, that there is no such thing as progressive improvement without a viable religion, I will reply to it.

An omnipotent and benevolent Creator of a suffering world, I have already argued, is an impossibility. In *such* a God of nature I am an atheist. For aught I know, you may succeed in showing the impossibility of Plato's dream. We should then be at a loss to portray a God, unless we can substitute some other conception, or will resort to the original quaker definition, and declare God to be *the spirit of rectitude within us*. Among good men there are no unbelievers in such a God, nor any sceptics of his revelation.*

The history of the French Revolution by MIGNET, though less attractively written than the Waverly Novelist's, is now generally admitted to be the most impartial that has appeared. By consulting it, at pages 275, 276, you will discover, (what Lorne and his authorities seem to have been ignorant of) that *it was a mere petty municipal faction,*† not the National Con-

* About two years since I heard, in the meeting of the Society of Friends, Cherry Street, Philadelphia, a member speak thus: "There is much said about infidelity and atheism; and many are made to fear these words. But fear them not; there is no infidel in the faith I profess, and no atheist in the God I worship; for my faith and my God are in the human heart." Sentiments like these were disseminated by the original founders of the Society; but it is only lately that some of their followers have thus ventured to return to the primitive heresies, which brought such punishment and reproach on those who first uttered them. My opponent will not contend, I presume, that such a God as this is responsible for volcanoes and earthquakes.

† The *Commune* of Paris; a paltry local club, consisting of some ten or a dozen wild fanatics, who obtained for a few weeks a temporary popularity, and during that time compelled the Convention to order, that the worship of Reason might be substituted for the Catholic worship. Chaumette and the notorious Hébert were its political chiefs, Ronsin its general, and a crazy, self-styled atheist, Anacharsis Clootz, its apostle. "It was supported," says Mignet (page 275), "in the sections by the revolutionary committees, which contained many obscure foreigners, who were supposed, and not without some appearance of truth, to be the agents of England, for the purpose of destroying the republic by driving it to excess and anarchy." The mad follies of this obscure knot of anarchists and hired conspirators, who are, that have been trumpeted throughout Europe as the doings of the French nation—the certain results of democracy and infidelity!

vention, that advocated what they called "the worship of reason." No such absurd decrees as those to which you refer, respecting the non-existence of God, and death being an eternal punishment, originated with the French legislature, or were for a moment sanctioned by the French nation. On the contrary, the National Convention decreed, at the request of Robespierre (5th Thermidor, 1793), "*that all outrages against, and measures contrary to the freedom of worship were prohibited.*" Robespierre's orders on that occasion were: "I ask you to prohibit particular privileges (the *Commune*) from assisting our enemies by undue measures, and that no armed force may interfere with that which relates to religious opinions."* And this very master-stroke that fearful tempest of opinion—this reckless man of blood was, who instituted (9th June, 1794), a "festival in honour of the supreme being," at which he officiated as chief superintendent the burning of a hideous effigy under which was personified atheism. It was but two days after this religious fete, that the sanguinary Couthon, under Robespierre's express direction and support, brought forward the famous (rather infamous) law of *Prairial*, which denied to the accused even counsel to assist them, increased the number of prosecutors from one to four, emptied the prisons and sent the guillotines by hundreds at a time; thus capping the work of mad cruelty and indiscriminate slaughter. But in all this there was not the shadow of anti-religious persecution. If ecclesiastics suffered, they suffered as monopolists, not as priests; it was a question of oppressive imposts, not of contested doctrines of benefices, not of doctrines. The bloody controversy was political, not theological. When religion mingled with it, only as it mingles in all struggles for liberty and improvement, as at this moment, for instance, it mingles with the question of parliamentary reform in England; where the great body of the clergy, fearing for their tithes, oppose with a zeal the most obstinate persevering to the efforts of the reforming ministry.

As to the real character of Bishop Horne's opposition to revolutionary principles, his coupling together *democracy* and *atheism*, clearly reveals it; not the less clearly, for your own explanatory note. The English bishop conceives his argument equally cogent against republicanism and scepticism: and it proves a little too much for Americans.

Far am I from "denouncing" either you or the New England puritans for your beliefs; or from imagining that you could set your creed aside at pleasure. I simply regret that you have done so, and I seek to place before you and our readers arguments which may convince you and them of its error; thus inducing you mildly and unconsciously *compelling* you to relinquish it.

ROBERT DALE C

* Mignet, p. 276.

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

LETTER VI.

New-York, August 20, 1831

the apparent contradictions, mis-statements, absurdities, &c., of the Bible, which sceptics urge as objections against it, are so many evidences of its original authenticity and uncorrupted transmission. Nothing but regard to fact could have induced sceptics of Scripture to record many things contained therein, through whose hands it has descended to us, to retain them, in case there had been a possibility of expunging them. This is demonstration, that the Scriptures have come down to us as they were originally written, and that they were written in accordance with the truth. These two positions will, during the course of this discussion, be seen to have a most important bearing on the question.

It is incumbent on the advocates of the Bible, so far as relates to its general authenticity, merely to show, that none of the objections of their opponents are insuperable; that they are objections that do not invalidate other history; and that they are not of such a nature as to show the writers to have intended to deceive. But it should be kept in view, that *sceptics* have duties to obviate as well as we; that they have proofs positive to invalidate, and not merely objections to urge. And suppose they are unable to make every thing perfectly satisfactory on their part, the question would then arise, whether every thing is proved so on theirs, in their rejection of the Bible; and if not, it is manifest that they have not succeeded in their object, such as if unobviated objections were an insuperable barrier on one side of a question, their own is involved in the difficulty.

I will now proceed to notice the objections contained in my opponent's last letter.

That God commanded the destruction of idolaters, I consider no objection at all. They deserved death, the more especially as they sacrificed human victims to their idols, and thus added to their idolatry. And were he in this day to command the extermination of the murderous idolaters of the East, the whole world would feel the justice of the command, as much as to that of the execution of a common murderer or pirate. If he does not adopt this course now, he, being omniscient, knows. The same remark will hold, in relation to the extermination of their idolatrous, murderous monarchs, who could be approached in no other than a secret manner. There is no difference between taking life openly and secretly. As to the Israelites borrowing gold, and silver, and raiment of the Egyptians, it was but getting of them a small portion of their

due, for their long and hard servitude, and not "swindling" them. In regard to the lying spirit which God employed to deceive Ahab, there was no compulsion in the case. God asked who would go and deceive him. The lying spirit answered that he would go; whereupon God said, Go. He had his own choice, the same as wicked men have. And although God, as the ruler of the universe, may be able to turn it all to some good account, yet *they* mean evil, and are therefore guilty. In *this* sense, the Lord may be said to *do* the moral evil existing in a city; to *create* such evil—to *move* men to *sin*—to *harden* their *hearts*, &c., just as he is said to have *put* this lying spirit into the mouth of the prophets of Ahab. I deny that it is shown by the Bible, that he "*rewards*" lying, and punishes *integrity*. The passages to which I am referred show no such thing. I deny that it shows that he required children to be "*punished*" for the sins of their parents. As the arbiter of life and death, he can order life to be taken for other reasons besides punishment. Even in nature, we see the children of wicked parents (say of drunkards) suffering *by reason* of the wickedness of those parents, but not as a *punishment* for it. And let it be remembered, that nothing short of an absolute *denial* of the *God of nature*, will enable my opponent to escape this dilemma, and wield the cases related in the Bible against that. Nor would even this denial enable him to meddle with the case of *Solomon*, for he was not the *first* child of David and Bathsheba. Read the account, friend Owen, and don't quote so from recollection, like Thomas Paine. And be a little more diffident, too, touching thy omniscience. How knowest thou that 'twould be "childishly useless" for a being who knows infinitely more than we do, to prohibit the wearing of "linsey-wolsey," and to condemn the sewing of pillows to arm-holes? Such a being does of course see more reasons for things than we do. Strange how friend Owen, who is so excessively "modest" at one time, as to say he knows nothing, should at another forget himself, and pretend to be super-omniscient. As to the census which David directed to be taken, it appears to have been done through vain-glory, and in an unauthorized manner. And the punishment inflicted therefore was very appropriate; his great number of subjects, in which he gloried, was reduced; but *their* being slain by an *angel of the Lord* was no more a punishment to *them*, than to die a common death. The law amongst the Jews respecting chastity, was well calculated to promote it; and, considering the primitive simplicity of the age in which it was instituted, it was neither brutal nor indecent; neither does it display an ignorance of physiological facts, as Aristotle himself will bear me witness. And, as to their test of jealousy, inasmuch as a miracle was involved in that, it devolves on the individual who denounces it to disprove the miracle.

The discrepancies in the accounts of the census of David, as given in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles, relative to the number of

ghting men, and the number of years of famine, can be very easily accounted for, when we consider the liability of transcribers to make such little mistakes. This does not show that those mistakes were in the original copy. Suppose, for instance, one of us were to copy the Bible, (for anciently there was no printing,) and were to make a blunder, by inserting a word or number different from the copy before us; how puerile would it be, for any one to seize on the blunder which he might find in our manuscript, and endeavour by that to show that the original copy was erroneous, or even that our transcription was not substantially to be depended on, because of a blunder or so. Yea, suppose there were some absolute mistakes of the kind under consideration in the original copy itself, what then? A narrative is not to be rejected on account of mere mistakes occurring in it, or on account of its not perfectly agreeing with some other narrative of the same thing. Nay, the probability is even greater that the Bible is true, from the very circumstance of its containing some discrepancies, than if it had contained none; for, a very near resemblance between two accounts excites suspicions of collusion between the writers. Thanks to God, then, for the discrepancies of the Bible: they assist in proving it. Bring on some more, friend Owen. Verily, thou art rendering essential service to the cause of religion, though with the same intention as did Joseph's brethren when they sold him to the Midianites, or Judas when he sold his Lord. But how trivial, after all, are such objections! Who ever thought of discrediting the narratives of Livy or Polybius, because of the discrepancies which occur between them? Who ever doubted the embassy of the Jews to the Emperor Claudian, because Philo says it occurred in harvest, and Josephus in seed-time? Who then *ought* to doubt, that David had a prodigious force at his disposal, and a famine threatened to him for numbering them, just because the *number* of that force and the *length* of that famine are differently stated in Samuel and Chronicles? It is a very general fault of sceptics, that they do not thoroughly examine the cases to which they object; on which account, they sometimes make most frivolous objections. Now they ought to know, that the Jews made use of the letters of their alphabet to denote numbers, which letters were analagous to our figures. How easily, then, can the numerical errors of the Bible be explained, by referring them to the careless omission, addition, or alteration of a solitary numerical letter, in any given case, on the part of a transcriber! For example. in 1 Kings, chap. iv., ver. 26, it is said that Solomon had forty thousand stalls for horses; whereas, in 2 Chronicles, chap. ix., ver. 25, the number is stated at only four thousand. My opponent is entirely welcome to this additional objection furnished by myself, and to as many more of the kind as he can find. Had I room, I would furnish him with more. They are pretty small concerns to set against the mass of evidence in favour of the Bible, which

has commanded the assent of such men as Bacon, Locke, Milton, Newton, and a host of other intellectual prodigies, after the deepest examination.

I have said repeatedly, that even the Jews would have had no right to slaughter the Canaanites without the divine command, and that their slaughter would have been murder under such circumstances. I have likewise said the same respecting the slaughter of the modern heathen. This is not making a thing immoral now which was moral then. Let God command a thing in *any* age, and it would be proper to obey. But because, under the different circumstances of different ages, he adopts different methods relative to some things, it does not follow that he is changeable, but, rather, that he is unchangeable; for, were he to act under one set of circumstances at one time in a certain manner, and act in the *same* manner at another time under *different* circumstances, this would indeed be, to be changeable. Nor does it follow, that *general* commands are not binding on us, because *local* ones are not. For instance, we consider ourselves bound to obey the *moral* law of God, as given in the ten commandments, although we do by no means feel bound to observe the Jewish *ceremonial* law, notwithstanding it is "recorded," as well as their extermination of the Canaanites. As well might it be asked, For what purpose is any thing in history recorded, unless it be to be imitated? as to ask such a question in relation to that extermination. As to the fallibility of the channel through which the Bible has descended to us, it is no more so than that of other history. That too is thousands of years old; has passed through the hands of many generations; has been translated by fallible men, &c. Thus we see, that, in invalidating the Bible, sceptics overthrow all history. Their rule therefore proves too much. Here I would just remark, that *the Bible* has not been "lost and found."—With regard to witchcraft, it would seem that my opponent has given up his idea, that modern knowledge proves *that* to be impossible. And if I were to assert, that it proves that Saturn's inhabitants can't "walk on their heads," I suppose I should have to retract too, as well as he, unless indeed it *does* prove this. But one would suppose, that, *after* this retraction, and his acknowledgment of his inability to disprove witchcraft, he would not denounce an *indictment* for it. It is worthy of remark, however, that, notwithstanding he *asserts* the idea of witchcraft to be so glaringly absurd, he does not give a single reason to *show* it to be so. Will he, in his next, favour us with some of his convincing arguments on the subject, instead of mere assertions?

The articles on placement and marriage are noticed in their appropriate places. I will just remark at this time, that the President of Hayti can live in fornication, as well as any other man; and that he *does* live so, if he lives with a woman to whom he is not married.—In answer to the question, whether I would read Ezekiel, &c., aloud to a sister or a daughter, I

say, yes; and to the whole world. But even if *I* were to deem the simplicity of those ancient writings not sufficiently refined for modern ears, a *Moral Physiologist* needs not make up a terrible face thereat—or at any thing else.

I thank my opponent for having at last virtually avowed himself an atheist. An infinite God he has all along disavowed, and now he denominates the finite one of Plato a *dream*; and surely he will not make a dream his God. And as there are atheists, and as there are *no* atheists in the God of the Hicksite quakers, (which he seems, on account of the earthquake and volcano dilemma, disposed to make his own,) it follows that they have *no* God—unless indeed it be themselves—and I readily concede, that “such” Gods as they are, “are *not* responsible for volcanoes and earthquakes;” so that my opponent has nothing to do now, but just clear up the difficulties of atheism, and then overthrow the Bible. I will mention him several at this time, which I trust he will not overlook; and when he shall have answered these, I have several more on hand for him. He may for his mere pastime just tell us how earthquakes and volcanic eruptions cause themselves; and, likewise, whether *nothing* fashioned him; whether a *mind* does not appear to have been concerned in the case; and whether it is as reasonable to suppose, that all possible appearances of intelligence, as exhibited in the construction of the human frame, and in every thing we see, are as likely to be produced by non-intelligence, as by intelligence. These questions are not foreign to our present discussion. They are the consequences resulting from the present position occupied by him to assail the Bible. This position he must defend, with all its absurdities, or not attack the Bible therefrom. Let him therefore fail not to do the one or the other—to defend or abandon it.

Touching the subject of the French Revolution, I must confess I am utterly astonished, that a man who pretends to common information, and who would not pass with the public for a trifle, should venture statements so totally at variance with history, and with the knowledge of millions of living witnesses, as did he in his last letter. Were I to make such random and unfounded assertions on any subject, I should expect to be universally reprobated for my reckless disregard of facts so notorious to all. I should expect every one, friend or foe, to advise me to say no more. What, sir; are we to be told that it was but “a petty municipal faction, a paltry local club, consisting of some ten or a dozen wild fanatics, that for a *few weeks* obtained the ascendancy, and compelled the National Convention to order the worship of reason to be substituted for the Catholic worship?” Are we to be told, that the French nation did not sanction these proceedings, and that in all this there was no religious persecution? I say again, I am astonished at this utter disregard of all testimony, living and dead. One might as well undertake to deny, that there was any revolution at all. For the statements in my

last, I gave four or five authorities. What I am now about to quote, is from Scott's *Life of Napoleon*, which I will venture to offset any day against the unauthorised assertions of a sceptic, when labouring thereby to show, that infidelity is not injurious to mankind.

"The Assembly had determined, that, all prejudices apart, the property of the church should come under confiscation for the benefit of the nation. It was in vain that the clergy exclaimed against these acts of rapine and extortion; in vain that they stated themselves as an existing part of the nation; in vain that they resounded in the hall the declaration solemnly adopted, that property was inviolable, save upon full compensation. It was to as little purpose that Mirabeau was reminded of his language, addressed to the Emperor Joseph, on a similar occasion. 'Despise the monks,' he had said, 'as much as you will, but do not rob them. Robbery is equally a crime, whether perpetrated on the most profligate atheist, or the most bigoted capuchin.' They assumed, for the benefit of the public, the whole right of property belonging to the church of France! But the majority of the National Assembly had yet another and even a more violent experiment to try upon the Gallican church establishment. It was one which touched the consciences of the French clergy in the same degree, as the former affected their fortunes. A civil constitution was framed for the clergy, declaring them totally independent of the See of Rome, and vesting the choice of bishops in the departmental authorities. To this constitution, each priest and prelate was required to adhere by a solemn oath. A subsequent decree of the Assembly declared the forfeiture of his benefice against whomsoever should hesitate. Their dependence on the See of Rome was a part of their creed, an article of their faith. Few, indeed, were the priests who accepted the constitutional oath. There were in the number only three bishops, one of whom was Talleyrand. A decree was afterward passed, that the clergy who refused to take the oath should be liable to deportation. Almost all the parish priests were driven from their cures by the absurd and persecuting fanaticism of that decree of the Assembly, which, while its promoters railed against illiberality and intolerance, deprived of their office and their livelihood, soon after of liberty and life, those churchmen who would not renounce the doctrines in which they had been educated, and which they had sworn to maintain." And in the infernal September four days' massacre, they were the peculiar objects of insult and cruelty. But more on this anon.

"One sect of the philosophers, sufficiently formidable for a time to gain the ascendancy, declared that it was not enough for a regenerate nation to have dethroned earthly kings, unless she stretched out the arm of defiance toward the powers which superstition had represented as reigning over boundless space. An unhappy man named Gobet, Constitutional Bishop of Paris, was brought forward in full procession, and, with tears and remorse,

was made to declare to the Convention, that Christianity was a piece of priestcraft, and to disown, in solemn and explicit terms, the existence of the deity; for which he received a fraternal embrace from the president of the Convention! The world for the first time heard an assembly of men, born and educated in civilization, and assuming the right to govern one of the finest of the European nations, uplift their united voice to deny the most solemn truth which man's soul receives, and renounce unanimously the belief and worship of a deity. A female, denominated by them the Goddess of Reason, a mere dancing-girl of the opera, and of a lewd character, was ushered into the hall of the Convention, by the Municipal Body of Paris, and placed on the right hand of the president. To this character, as the fittest representative of that reason whom they worshipped, the National Convention of France rendered public homage!!! This impious and ridiculous mummery had a certain fashion; and the installation of the Goddess of Reason was renewed and imitated throughout the nation, in such places where the inhabitants desired to show themselves equal to all the heights of the revolution.

"The churches were, in most districts of France, closed against priests and worshippers; the bells were broken and cast into cannon; the whole ecclesiastical establishment was destroyed; and the republican inscription over the cemeteries, declaring death to be a perpetual sleep, announced to those who lived under that dominion, that they were to hope for no redress, even in the next world. Intimately connected with these laws affecting religion, was that which reduced the union of marriage to the state of a mere civil contract of a transitory character, which any two persons might engage in and cast loose at pleasure, when their taste was changed, or their appetite gratified. Sophie Arnould, an actress, famous for the witty things she said, described the republican marriage as the sacrament of adultery!

The September massacre, to which allusion has already been made, exceeds in atrocity the power of language to describe. The number of individuals accumulated in the various prisons of Paris, amounted to about eight thousand. A banditti proceeded to the several prisons to execute the infernal scheme. Out of their own number, they formed a revolutionary tribunal, before whom the prisoners, dragged forth from their dungeons, were tried. When a victim received sentence of death, "he was thrust out into the street or yard, and despatched by men and women, who, with sleeves tucked up, arms dyed elbow deep in blood, and hands holding axes, pikes, and sabres, were executioners of the sentence. They often exchanged places, the judges going out to take the executioner's duty, and the executioners, with their reeking hands, sitting as judges in their turn! Those who intercepted the blows of the executioners by holding up their hands, suffered protracted torment; while those who offered no show of struggle were more easily despatched. Many

ladies, especially those belonging to the court, were thus murdered. The Princess de Lamballe, whose only crime seems to have been her friendship for Marie Antoinette, was literally hewn to pieces, and her head, and those of others, paraded on pikes through the metropolis! It was carried to the Temple on that accursed weapon, the features yet beautiful in death, and the long fair curls of the hair floating around the spear!" This hellish scene continued four days; "prison after prison was invested, entered, and, under the same form of proceeding, made the scene of the same inhuman butchery. The Jacobins had reckoned on making the massacre universal over France. But the example was not generally followed. The Community of Paris were not in fault for this. They did all they could to extend the sphere of murder. These infernal crimes were protracted by the actors for the sake of the daily pay of a louis to each, openly distributed amongst them by order of the Commune! When the jails were emptied of state criminals, the assassins attacked the Bicêtre, a prison where *ordinary* delinquents were confined!" So resolute was the resistance which they here met, that they were obliged to fire on them with cannon! Truchod announced to the Legislative Assembly, that four thousand perished in this massacre. "The bodies were interred in heaps, in immense trenches, *prepared beforehand by order of the Community of Paris*; but their bones have since been transferred to the subterranean catacombs which form the general charnel-house of the city. In those melancholy regions, while other relics of mortality lie exposed all around, the remains of those who perished in the massacre of September, are alone secluded from the eye. The vault in which they repose is closed with a screen of freestone, as if relating to crimes unfit to be thought of even in the proper abode of death, and which France would willingly hide in oblivion.

"In the meanwhile, the reader may be desirous to know what efforts were made by the Assembly to put a stop to a massacre carried on in contempt of all legal interference, and by no more formidable force than that of two or three hundred atrocious felons, often, indeed, diminished to only fifty or sixty. They issued no decree against the slaughter; they demanded no support from the public force. Where, in that hour, were the Girondists," so celebrated by their admirers for all that is great and noble in principle and character? "Whatever was the motive of their apathy, the Legislative Assembly was nearly silent on the subject of the massacres, not only while they were in progress, but for several days afterward."

At Nantes, hundreds, men, women, and children, were forced on board of vessels, which were scuttled and sunk in the Loire; and this was called republican baptism! Men and women were stripped, bound together, and thus thrown into the river; and this was called republican marriage! Crowds of citizens were piled together in dungeons, where the air was pestilential from ordure, from the carcases of the dead, and the infectious diseases

of the dying. Men, women, and children, were to be seen sprawling together, like toads and frogs in the season of spring, in the waters of the Loire, too shallow to afford them instant death, the uppermost of the expiring mass praying to be thrust into deeper water, that they might brave the means of death. Humanity forbears to detail the hundred other abominations there committed, compared with which, the sharp, sudden, and sure blow of the Parisian guillotine, was clemency. At Lyons, a black flag was hoisted by the besieged on the Great Hospital, as a sign that the fire of the assailants should not be directed on that asylum of hopeless misery. The signal seemed only to draw the republican bombs to the spot where they could create the most frightful distress, and outrage, in the most frightful degree, the feelings of humanity. The judges of the revolutionary committee were worn out with fatigue—the arm of the executioner was weary—the very steel of the guillotine was blunted. Collet d'Herbois devised a more summary method. A number of from two to three hundred victims at once, were dragged from prison to the Place de Broteaux, one of the largest squares in Lyons, and there subjected to a fire of grape shot. The sufferers fell to the ground like singed flies, mutilated but not slain, and imploring their executioners to despatch them speedily. And all this under the direction of the French Jacobin Convention!!! These were the philosophers who, looking up toward heaven, loudly and literally defied the deity to make his existence known, by launching his thunderbolts. The party to which they belonged, during the two or three years they had the ascendancy, imprisoned three hundred thousand of their countrymen in the name of liberty, and put to death more than half the number under the sanction of fraternity." And 'twas not till the Corsican came into power in 1800, that persecution ceased, by the overthrow of infidelity. Then it was, after ten long years of anarchy and blood, that measures were adopted "for tranquilizing the *religious* discord by which the country had been so long agitated. Buonaparte (such was the decree of providence,) became the means of restoring to France the free exercise of the Christian faith. The mummery of Reveilliere Lepaux's heathenism, was by general consent abandoned; the churches were restored to public worship; pensions were allowed to such religious persons as took an oath of fidelity to the government; and more than twenty thousand clergymen, with whom the prisons had been filled in consequence of intolerant laws, were set at liberty on taking the same vow. Public and domestic rites of worship in every form were tolerated and protected, and the law of the decades, or theophylanthropic festivals, were abolished."

And was there in all this no religious persecution? What then *is* religious persecution? And was this the noble struggle to put down tyranny and intolerance and injustice? Was this a period when the power of truth and justice shone conspicuously? Are we to be told, that these acts are to be attri-

lated to amere municipal faction, of a few weeks' standing! No, sir. It was the *infidel* Jacobin faction, headed by the demoniac triumvirate, Robespierre, Danton, Marat, and other kindred spirits, organized and operative throughout France, that brought upon her all these woes. And though, when Robespierre became the sole dictator, he deemed it policy to check the most outrageous of these excesses, he still remained an infidel. He did indeed propose to the Convention the recognition of the deity, whom they had previously disowned; but this was all. Christianity he did *not* recognize. He therefore remained an infidel—and a *heathen* infidel too, decreeing that a day in each decade, (for the very week was changed into ten days,) should be dedicated to some particular virtue, with hymns and processions to its honour. True, he instituted a festival in honour of the supreme being; which festival would have been taken for a pagan one in a pagan country. "There was a general muster of all Paris, divided into bands of young women and matrons, old men and youths, with oaken boughs and drawn swords, and all other emblems appertaining to their ages. They were preceded by the representatives of the people, having their hands full of ears of corn, and spices, and fruits." When the ceremony of burning the effigies of atheism, ambition, egotism, and other evil principles was completed, "the young men brandished their weapons, the old patted them on the head, the girls flung about their flowers, and the matrons flourished aloft their children." Well *might* he, two days after *such* a religious fete, bring forward no matter what law, for all the influence which *that* would have upon him. Admitted, sir, that he was a man of blood. So much the worse for infidelity; for he was an infidel too! And this infidel guillotined his fifty fellow-citizens per day! Such was the quantity of blood shed in the place of execution, that it became necessary to make a conduit to carry it off! Marat, once his colleague, usually calculated on two hundred and sixty thousand heads, to satiate *his* thirst for blood. Danton, the other of the sanguinary trio, was for *great* massacres, and *done with it*. "*He* murdered to glut his rage; *Robespierre*, to avenge his injured vanity, or to remove a rival whom he envied; *Marat*, from the same instinctive love of blood which induces a wolf to continue his ravage of the flock, long after his hunger is appeased." These three men, sir, were representatives of the *moral*, the *enlightened*, the *refined* city of Paris, and leaders of the dominant party of the nation—all infidels, valuing the lives of their fellow men not a straw. Paris was infidel; France was infidel; and their persecutions and murders were both religious and political, levelling at once the altar and the throne. All belief in future accountability was removed; all moral restraint was shaken off; infidelity reigned; and here is the result. 'Tis in vain to attempt to hide its enormities; to talk of petty municipalities, and foreign emissaries. The *French* nation are involved in those crimes; their

hands are dyed in the blood of their king, in the blood of their priests, in the blood of their patriots, and in the blood of one another. May the Lord grant, that the day may be far distant, when principles which lead to such results as these, shall gain the ascendant here—principles which my opponent is industriously labouring to disseminate.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

TO ORIGEN BACHELER.

LETTER VI.

August 27, 1831.

I pray you to bear in mind, that it is the authenticity of the Bible as a record from heaven which I question, not the general truth of many narratives therein recorded. It contains, doubtless, like all other ancient histories and remote traditions, both truth and falsehood. I look upon the biblical writers as ignorant men, who mixed up, as Livy and other ancient writers have done, fable and history. Such obscure, ancient evidence as this may sometimes furnish plausible grounds for belief of what is not, in itself, improbable. It may suffice to afford us a reasonable probability, that certain great changes happened; that certain remarkable men existed; that this kingdom was destroyed, and that empire established. Nay, some even of the minor details may chance to be correct. The Romans may have stolen the Sabine women while witnessing the celebration of games in honour of the god Consus: the Benjamites may have stolen the daughters of Shiloh, during the feast of the Lord at Bethel: Mahomet may have had four wives, and Solomon seven hundred: Idomeneus may have sacrificed his son, and Jephtha his daughter, in pursuance of a vow equally foolish and cruel:* Joshua may have slain hundreds of thousands of the Canaanites, and Cæsar of the Gauls: Moses and Aaron may have been believed prophets by the Israelites, and the Delphic priests by the Romans; and in both cases the hierophants may have gained places and wealth and honours by the belief. There may have been—doubtless there were—bloody wars, frightful massacres, treasons, burnings, savage laws, and expensive ceremonies, both at Rome and Jerusalem; for these were in accordance with the barbarous spirit of olden times: and then again, the dark picture may have been relieved

* Sanctioned, however, Leviticus, chap. xxvii., ver. 28.

by episodes of human affection, such as the friendship of David and Jonathan, or of Damon and Pythias. All this may be admitted, not by any means as certain in its details, but as probable in its general outline. But what then? Because we believe, on Livy's authority, that Rome was governed by consuls, are we to credit his miracles also? his fables of soothsayers and marvellous signs in heaven? of showers of milk and blood? of oxen speaking? or of a woman changing her sex? And, in like manner, because we may think it likely, on Moses' authority, that Israel was ruled by judges, are we therefore also to believe, that God divided the Red Sea before his favourites? that he caused the sun* to stand still to aid one tribe of barbarians in slaughtering another? that he burned in a bush without consuming it? that he transformed Lot's wife into a pillar of salt, and himself into a pillar of fire? that he rained manna? that he caused Balaam's ass to speak, and so on?

Historical evidence, even the most authentic, is scanty and insufficient enough, to furnish proof of events even the most reasonable, and occurrences the most natural and likely. There is the difficulty of obtaining impartial information, even on the spot and at the moment, and when no especial motive exists for misrepresentation; there is the greater difficulty, if the spirit of partizanship mingle, in the slightest degree, in the transaction; the still greater difficulty, if the historian be removed from the scene of action; and this difficulty still infinitely augmented, if years or centuries have passed, between the deed and the record. To this, in the case of *ancient* histories, written before the invention of printing, must be added, first the scanty opportunity, as the work was never generally circulated, of its errors being corrected; secondly, the almost impossibility, either of obtaining or transmitting written records, unaltered by the carelessness, or the whim, or perhaps the dishonest intention, of the scribe; or perchance, mutilated or partially suppressed, by the librarian.†

To talk, therefore, of ancient history *positively proving* any particular occurrence whatever, however natural and probable that occurrence may be, is to speak without reflection. To talk of thereby proving miracles—that is, occurrences out of nature, out of probability, foreign to our experience, discountenanced

* If Joshua had known any thing of astronomy he would have written it, "the earth to stand still." The sun stands still at all times. And yet a book exhibiting such palpable ignorance of science claims to be divine!

† William Penn, than whom to a large portion of the citizens of this country, higher authority cannot be quoted, in arguing that the Bible *cannot be the rule of faith and practice*, says: "I would fain ask of them (those who contend for the scriptures being the rule,) how they are assured that they (the scriptures,) are not miserably abused by carelessness or design: since we see, that using the utmost diligence, both translation, transcription, and printing are subject to numerous mistakes, and those sometimes very material, against which the scripture itself can be no fence!—*Penn's Select Works*, London, 1782; vol. i., p. 302.

by all analogy—is to push absurdity to the extreme. To imagine that any thing, in itself so eminently fallible, can prove infallibility, is to violate the plainest dictates of common sense. AN INFALLIBLE REVELATION CAN COME TO MAN THROUGH HIS SENSES ALONE. It cannot be recorded, without losing its infallibility. It cannot be transmitted, even from a single generation, without becoming at once a human record, and therefore a fallible evidence. By Joseph in his dream,* the angel's declaration (Matthew, chap. i., ver. 20) "that which is conceived of thy wife is of the Holy Ghost," may have been felt to be revelation. To us, it can only, *in the very nature of things*, be human testimony; distant, uncertain, fallible, human testimony: fallible, *from its very nature*, however true the circumstance, however trustworthy the dream may have been. Without denying, therefore, that the angel of God entered Joseph's bedchamber, we may most positively deny, that men now have—nay *can* possibly have—even the most distant approach to infallible evidence of this, through any written or printed record; or through any other medium, except a similar, personal revelation. Such an infallible revelation cannot be imparted (and preserve its infallibility) from one man to his brother; far, far less to his distant posterity. Supposing its reality, it is a revelation confined to one breast and to one lifetime. Its infallibility is totally destroyed by the very first remove, and its probability essentially weakened, (in an increasing ratio, too) by every succeeding one.

In thus speaking of the fallibility of the Bible revelation, I dive into no antiquarian subtleties; I collate no laboured historical researches, I inquire not what right the council of Nice† (or of Laodicea) had to decide, by its canons the religion of the world; I ask not by what authority its reverend members admitted some books as canonical, and rejected others as apocryphal; I agitate not the question, whether any of the four gospels were ascribed to the authors whose names they bear, until the days of Irenæus; I refrain from all expression of doubt as to the veracity or sanity‡ of the Christian fathers; I meddle

* It is not a little remarkable, that the whole superstructure of doctrinal Christianity rests, according to the evangelists' own showing, *on a dream*. The corner-stone of Christian orthodoxy is the belief, that Jesus was supernaturally begotten, and the record of a dream said to have been dreamed by Joseph two thousand years ago, is the evidence—the *infallible* evidence:—for this belief.

† If we wanted evidence, by the way, how uncertain all ancient records are, we might find it, even in the history of this very council. "The ancient writers," says Mosheim, "are neither agreed concerning the time nor place in which it was assembled, the number of those who sat in council, nor the bishop who presided in it. No authentic acts of its famous sentence have been committed to writing, or, at least, none have been transmitted to our times."—Mosheim, i., 337.

‡ Yet what event in all ecclesiastical history more remarkable, or more likely to have been faithfully recorded, than this?

† If the term seem too strong, let us read the following from the pen of the famous Tertullian, who flourished A.D. 200. "*Why am I not ashamed*

not with the inquiry how unlettered fishermen, speaking Syriac, should have learned to write gospels in Greek, nor how Moses could record his own death in the Pentateuch. I leave to others, more deeply read in controversial lore, the task of digging up these learned arguments. I speak as a plain man to plain men; of such things as all can examine and judge, without the aid of Lardner's folios or Horsley's criticisms. Enough for me, and enough surely for any reasonable inquirer, that the Bible is a record written by men, copied by men, translated by men, printed by men, transmitted by men, through tens or hundreds of generations.

I peruse it much as I would any other ancient, party history. When I read the history of Jesus for instance, I can as little believe its miracles as those recorded by Livy. But the outline of Jesus' life and character (making allowance for the misconceptions or misrepresentations of his biographers) I am disposed to believe. Jesus' history, apart from the marvels with which ignorance has disfigured it, is pretty much the history of all democratic reformers. He pleaded the poor man's cause, and was called the friend of publicans and sinners; he spoke against hypocritical forms and idle ceremonies, and was denounced as a Sabbath breaker and one who set at nought the law; he exposed the selfishness of the rich and the powerful, and thus incurred their hatred; he attacked the priesthood of the day, and by their machinations he lost his life.

This is a picture too true to nature, and too sadly verified by the analogy of all history, to be refused credit, merely because its outlines are awkwardly filled up. Besides, there is, mixed up with the mystery that beclouds Jesus' biography, too much of gentle, tolerant, high-minded principle, and too much of a liberality and a benevolence beyond the character of the bigoted age in which he lived, to warrant the supposition that it was all the biographers' invention. Ignorant men invent marvels and mysteries, and imagine adventures and intrigues, and paint heroes and tyrants. But they seldom invent tolerant democratic precepts, or imagine unpretending deeds of mercy, or paint gentle reformers. The inference is, that the picture drawn in the gospels had its original; and that that original was a wise and amiable man; too wise and too amiable to be understood or appreciated by those who undertook to write his history.*

of maintaining that the Son of God was born? Why? because it is itself a shameful thing. I maintain that the Son of God died. Well! that is wholly credible, because it is monstrously absurd. I maintain that after having been buried he rose again; and that I take to be absolutely true, because it is manifestly impossible.—De Spectaculis, C. 39.

* We have, besides, what I consider sufficient historical evidence of the existence of the Jewish philosopher. Tacitus, in the celebrated passage contained in his "Annals," (xv., 44,) "of which," says Gibbon, "the most sceptical authority is obliged to respect the truth," says: "They" (the Christians) "derived their name and origin from Christ, who, in the reign of Tiber-

Convinced I am, that if Jesus could now return upon earth, it would vex him not a little to see how his words and doings have been warped and mystified, and to find that the record of that life which he appears to have sacrificed in attacking one superstition, had been made the corner-stone on which to erect another.

Yet withal, I do not set myself up as an apologist for all that we may fairly suppose Jesus to have said and done. Perfection is not the attribute of humanity; and the sage of Nazareth had doubtless his faults and failings, like other men. I only say that I see so much of enlightened benevolence even in the garbled transcript of his sayings and doings as contained in his biography, that I cannot but rank him as one of the benefactors of his species and reformers of his times, and that I cannot but regret that he found no better biographers than Matthew and his fellow evangelists.*

Your defence of the morality of the Pentateuch, I leave with our readers. Your explanation of contradictions by supposing careless scribes, is very probably correct, and is proof positive that the Bible is not an infallible record. Your opinion regarding Ezekiel is a matter of taste, in which I differ from you. Your argument adduced in proof that I and all Hicksite quakers are atheists, has already several times been replied to. Your questions are but samples of a thousand regarding the world and its origin which it is very easy and very useless to ask, and quite impossible to answer. When I pretend to all knowledge, it will be time enough to put them to me.

It is some time since I have chanced upon such a flagrant, but I will suppose unintentional confounding of dates and events as is contained in the conclusion of your last letter. I must needs dissect it for the benefit of our readers.

First, you have a long list of grievances and outrages, viz.:

1. Transfer of ecclesiastical benefices to the municipalities.
2. Declaration of independence of the See of Rome.
3. Abjuration of the miserable Gobet.
4. Old story of the Goddess of Reason.
5. Decrees of death being an eternal sleep; shutting up of churches; &c.
6. Drownings at Nantes, &c.

All these you adduce as triumphant refutation of my formerly expressed opinion, that "there never was a period when the power of truth and of justice shone more conspicuously than in the *first months* of the revolution."†

ius, had suffered death, by the sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate." Tacitus wrote about the year 110 to 120.

* Our readers will find opinions so exactly similar to these in Jefferson's *Memoirs* (see his letters to William Short of the 13th April and 4th August, 1820,) that had not these very views been given by us in the *Free Enquirer*, long before the publication of his *Memoirs*, we might well have been imagined to have borrowed them from thence.

† The words here italicised you saw fit, in quoting from me, to omit.

Now, sir, you know, or ought to know, that the French Revolution commenced in 1789; you know, or ought to know, that no excesses whatever were committed for *two whole years* thereafter; you know, or ought to know, that a more daring, a more honest, and a more moderate public body, has rarely if ever (even on the admission of its enemies) been charged with the destinies of a nation, *than the National Assembly of 1789** from its very first sitting in June, 1789, to its voluntary dissolution in April, 1791. You yourself must have admired—or, if you have not, every friend of freedom who ever perused the stirring story has—the glorious spirit that dictated the famous Tennis Court oath;† the admirable and dignified daring of the celebrated 23rd of June;‡ the enthusiastic disinterestedness of the memorable 4th of August;§ and so through a long list of wise laws, and noble sacrifices to liberty, until the great federation of the 14th of July, 1790; when the king and people met, as a father and his family on the Champ de Mars; and when the amiable and imbecile Louis took that oath, which, had he kept, what years of slaughter, and then of slavery, might have been spared to his ill-fated people!

You know, sir, or ought to know, that these two years exhibited one scene of alternate haughtiness and weakness on the part of the French court and its monarch, just as Louis happened to be governed by his own better judgment, or by the advice of his false courtiers, or of the intriguing and unfortunate Marie Antoinette, and one scene of mingled firmness and forbearance on the part of the Assembly; that the nation hailed, almost with rapture, the least appearance of returning moderation in Louis,|| and that it was not till they had been cheated and outraged, again and again, by a corrupt and hypocritical court, that they learned to distrust, and to act with severity. You know, or ought to know, that of the six accusations already noticed, the *two first only* have any thing to do with the decrees of the Assembly or with the events of these two years; which alone I have ever thought of approving.

The Assembly did (December 2, 1789,) put the nation in

* It was expressly to this body alone, *not to the National Convention of 1792*, that I formerly applied the same approbatory terms. All this you most strangely overlook.

† *Mignet*, p. 37. The oath "that they would never separate until they had given a constitution to France."

‡ *Mignet*, pp. 38, 39. The day when the Assembly declared, "it should be dissolved only at the point of the bayonet."

§ *Mignet*, p. 64. On that day was the voluntary surrender of feudal rights, personal servitude, seignorial jurisdictions, immunities, perquisites, pluralities, monopolies, and all the long list of privileged abuses.

|| Witness the deportment of the Assembly, when, on the 26th of June, 1789, Louis, warned by Laineourt of the sentiments of the people, visited their session. Witness also his reception by the Assembly, on the day of their dissolution, in April, 1791.

possession of the clerical benefices;* and shortly after did decree that the clergy of France were independent of the See of Rome: with all the rest they had as little to do as you or I have had. I approve both these measures. The clergy, as Mignet well expresses it, "were the depositories only of the benefices of which they were deprived." And to leave the whole ecclesiastical establishment of regenerated France under the control of an ambitious and cunning Roman pontiff, would have been little less than an act of madness. Both these measures were purely political.† It is not very marvellous, however, that *Maury*, on the part of the clergy, and *Cazalès*, on that of the nobility, should denounce such propositions as robbery and persecution, and that the modern priesthood should echo the denunciation.

As to the opinion of that prince of novelists, that most seducing and most tory of modern writers, Walter Scott, it is perfectly in

* "The benefices of the clergy amounted to many millions of francs. If the nation charged itself with their debts, with the ecclesiastical service, with that of the hospitals, with the endowment of its ministers," (mark that—the clergy were all to be provided for,) "there still remained sufficient to satisfy all the public rents, as well perpetual as for life, and to reimburse the expenditure of the officers of the judicature. The clergy struggled against this proposition. The discussion was very animated. It was proved, despite of its resistance, that the clergy were not the proprietors, but only the depositories, of the benefices consecrated to the altars, by the piety of the kings and the faithful; and that the nation, in furnishing the means of supporting the service, was entitled to resume possession of these benefices. The decree which put them in possession was carried on the 2nd of December. From that moment the hatred of the clergy to the revolution broke forth."—*Mignet*, p. 94.

* The clergy sought to make them religious questions, it is true:

"When the clergy saw the administration of the benefices transferred, they sought, by every means, to control the operations of the municipalities; at mid-day they excited the catholics against the protestants; in the pulpit they alarmed their consciences; in the confessional they treated the sale as sacrilege; in the tribune they endeavoured to excite suspicion on the sentiments of the Assembly. They originated, as much as possible, religious questions; in order, by this means, to compromise and confound the cause of their own interest with that of religion."—*Mignet*, pp. 96, 97.

Speaking of the declaration of independence from the See of Rome, he says:

"It was not the work of philosophers, but of austere Christians, who wished to build up a church on the basis of the constitution, and to make them both concur in promoting the welfare of the state. The reduction of bishoprics to the number of departments, the conformity of the ecclesiastical with the civil boundaries, the nomination of bishops by the electors who were to choose the administrators and the deputies, the suppression of chapters, and the replacing of canons by curates—such was this plan. No part of it made any encroachment on the dogmas or worship of the church. For a long time the bishops and other ecclesiastics were nominated by the people; and as to the diocesan limits, it was an operation purely national, and which had nothing to do with religion. The support of the members of the clergy was moreover generously provided for; and if the high dignitaries saw their revenues diminished, the cures, who formed the most numerous and most useful class, obtained an augmentation of theirs."—*Mignet*, pp. 97, 98.

accordance with his conduct at a late anti-reform meeting at Roxburgh, Scotland, when, though in miserable health, the venerable defender of the things and powers that be, stood up and declared, "that if he were to lose his life in consequence of his attendance at that meeting, he would willingly yield his last breath in opposition to the measure now before parliament." To be sure, the infamous system of boroughmongering which that measure (the famous Reform Bill,) attacks, has hitherto filled the British senate with the paid creatures of an unprincipled aristocracy; but rotten boroughs, Sir Walter thinks, as well as ecclesiastical benefices, are property that has been bought and paid for; and he is willing to sacrifice his life to maintain the one, and his reputation to vindicate the truth of the other. Within his own splendid domain let the author of *Waverley* exert his fairy prerogative! No rebel will there rise up to question his authority, nor any revolution supervene to disturb the gorgeous dreams that arise at his bidding; but let him abstain from an attempt to perpetuate the magnificent follies he has spent a lifetime in describing; let him not transmute our admiration of the novelist into pity or reprobation of the man, nor force us to remember, that he to whose Promethean fancy we are indebted for the pleasant wiling away of many an idle hour, must yet be identified with the politician who opposed reform, and the historian who abused reformers.

The 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th, in your list of complaints, are, I repeat it, the acts of the *Commune* of Paris, composed of a few mad fanatics and foreign traitors, who, for some weeks, *over-awed the convention* of 1793, and even found occasional imitators of their tyrannical follies throughout the provinces. The brief duration of their authority, destroyed by Robespierre, in December, 1793, is proof sufficient how little the nation was disposed to endure their extravagances.* And even that brief authority they owed to the *enemies of liberty*. In a revolution every thing depends upon a first refusal and a first struggle. On their heads who haughtily refused the mild and moderate reform proposed in 1789, and thus roused the passions of an oppressed and indignant people, and who, for more than two whole years, chafed that people's patience, basely abused their easy temper, and thus stirred up the sleeping elements of violence and anarchy, still adding fuel to the flame, by spreading over all France their own paid creatures, who, assuming the republican cloak, were rewarded according to the deep die of the atrocities they might succeed in instigating, and then in

* The great fuss which is made about the "goddess of reason" procession is, by the way, very much overdone. Every one who witnessed the original Tammany celebrations, in this city, some thirty or forty years ago, knows that the "goddess of liberty" formed one in the procession without any hue and cry being raised in consequence. And why not the goddess of reason as well as of liberty. Let us not take fright at our own shadows.

laying at the door of the principles they traitorously outraged—on their heads be visited the shame of those deeds that are falsely charged to infidelity!

As to the 6th count in your indictment, regarding “republican baptism” and “republican marriage,” “what could be stronger proof,” as Lafayette remarked to me, in a conversation to which I have already alluded, “what could be stronger proof that it was the salaried enemies of reform, not its hot-headed friends, who instigated these inhuman crimes, than that the name *republican* was thus carefully and officiously coupled with whatever was most revolting to the common feelings of mankind?”

I have already exceeded the limits I had prescribed to myself, and must therefore await your reply.

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

LETTER VII.

New-York, September 3, 1831.

Sir,

I am by no means disposed to shrink from the defence of the Bible as “a record from heaven.” Indeed, if it is not such a record, it is not authentic; for it claims to be so. I shall not therefore admit, that it is liable even to the mistakes incident to common authentic history, much less to those of mere tradition. I shall not admit, that it contains a mixture of truth and falsehood, fable and history, like the works of ancient heathen writers, and that its miracles have no better proof than theirs. I am fully prepared to show the contrary. I am prepared to show, that its claims to a divine original are fully sustained. But were I not thus prepared, I could defend it on other grounds. All that the advocates of the Bible are bound to do, is, to show that there is *rational evidence* for believing it. I know of no obligation devolving on us, to furnish stronger proof of this book, than is necessary to prove any thing else. There is what men admit to be proof of past events, by which they discriminate between history and fable. There is what they deem to be sufficient evidence of things, to entitle them to credit. This consists, not in the nature of the things themselves, but in the nature of the evidences which attest them; as their rejection of some narrations in history, probable enough in themselves considered, but unsustained by the proper evidence, plainly shows. Nor do they reject the accounts of the prodigies and miracles contained in the ancient heathen writings, because they

are such accounts, but because they have not credible evidence to sustain them—evidence which they consider proof of other things. Why do men believe that a great conqueror lived by the name of Alexander, surnamed the Great? Not because the thing is probable in itself, but because there is rational evidence for believing it. It is very easy to test this. Just write a life of an imaginary hero, containing no intrinsic improbabilities at all, and see who will believe that such a character ever existed. But above all, write a book like the Bible, filled with signs and wonders, and miracles, together with names, dates, and countries, and see if it will *then* be received. Thus we see, that there is what men consider proof of past events, by which they are induced to receive some things, and reject others. They do not absurdly require such proof as in the nature of things cannot exist. They have no doubt that Alexander the Great lived, although they did not see him, and have nothing but “recorded” testimony to that effect. Neither do they consider the probability of his existence at all weakened, on account of its having happened so long ago, *or on any other account*. Nor have they any belief in the heathen prodigies, not however because they are merely recorded, or because they are said to have happened so long ago, (for they would not believe *living, verbal* heathen testimony to this effect,) but because they do not consider the evidences themselves veracious. These are the rules which the good sense of mankind has taught them to apply in the regulation of their belief in relation to tradition and history. And were they to depart from these rules, and adopt the absurd one of scepticism, requiring a kind of proof to command their assent which nothing of this nature can have, they would at once reject all history, all evidence, and might as well shut up their tomes of ancient lore and their courts of justice at once, and settle down in the limited sphere of their own personal observation. To carry out the rule, they should read no *present* history, not even the daily papers, nor hear oral communication of any kind. They should believe nothing at all, either written or verbal; for who are they that write or utter declarations, but men? And how do they know but they mistake, seeing it is so difficult for them to obtain “impartial information even on the spot, and at the moment, and when no especial motive exists for misrepresentation?” How do they know but they are swayed by a spirit of “partizanship?” Nay, a greater difficulty still. Perchance the narrator was far “removed from the scene of action.” And who would think of *believing* any thing, unless the individual who relates it saw it himself? For example, one man tells another that Napoleon died an exile on the rock of St. Helena. Did the narrator see him die there? No. Well, then, it is “very difficult” to believe this story. But how “infinitely” the difficulty augmented, if years and centuries have passed between the deed and the record! Who will believe this story years and centuries hence? Who would be so credulous as to

ny thing which "record" says took place years and ago? but the more especially, *thousands* of years ago, ancient history," says Alexander, and the Cæsars, and imaginary beings, flourished? For you must know, these ancient histories were written before the invention of printing, in consequence of which they were never generally corrected, and therefore had but a scanty opportunity of having errors corrected." Add to this "the almost impossibility, of obtaining or transmitting written records, unaltered by the caprice, or the whim, or perhaps the dishonest intention of the scribe, or perchance mutilated or suppressed by the tyrant." Who, under all these circumstances, would ever regard ancient history as any thing but a very uncertain novel, and present history, and all testimony, as but questionable? This, sir, is scepticism carried out. We see, that the rule which sceptics adopt to disprove the Bible, would overthrow all history and all testimony. He who would have nothing therefore to fear for the Bible, were to apply it to the evidences of common history; for, if they could overthrow the former, till they shake the confidence of the latter, it will be some time before they succeed. Till time shall have grown so grey, that unborn generations shall doubt the existence of Washington and Napoleon. They would do well, then, to possess their souls in

peace, for argument's sake, as sceptics desire. Be it so, that there is only "a reasonable probability" of the truth of the Bible story, and that, "*from its very nature,*" we cannot be certain of its correctness. What now have they gained? Are we to believe a thing, because we do not *know* it to be true? Are we even to suspend judgment in such a case? No, surely, we should believe nothing at all, how well we are justified. Thus we see, that a thing may be entitled to our belief though we may not be *certain* of its truth. Well, since we have not "infallible evidence" or a "personal knowledge" of the truth of the Bible. The question of its truth, which is the very question under consideration, is not on this circumstance at all. The inquiry is, not of its *probability*, but the *probability*, of the evidence of the Bible. The question is not, *How strong* are its evidences? but, *Has it* any? It is not, whether we should believe it *strongly* or not, or whether we should *believe* it. And surely, it would be a good rule to adopt, to *disbelieve* a thing because it might have *probable* evidences in its favour, and thus disbelieve on *probability*—refuse to scamper out of a house when it is announced as falling, merely because we might not be the case. I should deem it more rational to *obey* belief, than an *improbable* unbelief. Should we believe in a thing, because that thing is probable? or even "suspend judgment" in such a case? Ought

he not positively to believe? But then, in a case involving their eternal interests, sceptics tell us they want something more than probabilities. Why.—If the Bible should not prove true, scepticism has no hell for them for having believed it? Where then is the danger? But how much do they better the case, by being sceptics? Are there any thing more than probabilities in the case of scepticism? Nay, if the Bible is probably true, (which is the question we are now considering,) the probabilities are *against* scepticism. And if scepticism should not be true, the Bible *has* a hell for sceptics. So that there is a fearful risk in embracing scepticism, and none at all in believing the Bible. Judge then, whether 'tis the more rational to reject the Bible, allowing it to be only probable, or to receive it—to believe in infidelity at a tremendous risk, against probability, or to believe in the Bible without risk, in accordance with probability.

But, as I have already said, I rest not the subject here. The Bible has more than probable, more than common historical evidence. I am prepared to prove, if any thing can be proved by testimony, that the miracles of the Bible are facts, and that its prophecies were written before they were fulfilled; and consequently, that it is not only authentic, but divine. I am prepared to show, that it is *morally certain*, yea, more, that it is *absolutely* certain, as a matter of our own observation, from the daily fulfilment of its prophecies before our eyes—so certain, that not only the sceptic, who has no risk to run by embracing it, but the Jew, the Mahometan, the Pagan, threatened as they are with hells of their own, if recreant to their own faith, may, with the greatest safety imaginable, embrace it notwithstanding. God, in his infinite mercy, has given us a hundred fold greater evidence of this book, than is necessary to defend his mere justice, by affording us grounds barely sufficient for rational belief. He has so overwhelmed us with proof upon proof, that it is necessary for the sceptic absolutely to shut his eyes, and stop his ears, and fight his way down to ruin, in order to get thither. And those who are unbelievers under such circumstances, do indeed deserve double damnation. Far more tolerable will it be in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for them.

There were several notes and remarks in the last letter to me, which require a passing notice, before I proceed to the subject of the French revolution. That respecting the sacrifice of his daughter by Jephtha comes first in order. Now, if it be admitted that after having made his vow, he was under obligation to *fulfil* it, this would not be admitting that he did *right* in making the vow itself. No passage of scripture in *Leviticus* elsewhere directs any such vow to be made. But, in *Exodus* that *no* vow that is made should be broken, it does, in the fullest manner, show the sacred nature of a vow, and in the strongest possible barrier against making precipitate

seeing there is no chance to retract. Hence, we read of only two instances in the whole history of the Jews, where human life was sacrificed in this way, viz., that in the case of Jephtha's daughter, and that in the case of John the Baptist; and in neither of these cases did the individual making the vow intend the result that followed. This surely does not look as if the Jews understood Leviticus, chap. xxvii., ver. 28, as intending to prescribe human sacrifices. Nor do I so understand it, by any means. As to the remark respecting the sun standing still, this is too petty an objection for a *first-rate* sceptic to urge. No sceptical *writer* should *descend* to such paltry trifles. Why, sir, with all our knowledge of astronomy, we talk of the sun's *rising* and *setting*, &c., as readily as did Moses and Joshua. And had they known ever so much about astronomy, they would have expressed themselves just as they did, on all those points. We should say the sun stood still, if the earth were to stop in her career, even in this day of astronomy—and say right too. I apprehend my opponent is not a very thorough astronomer, or he would not say it “stands still at all times.”—His assertion, that “the whole superstructure of Christianity rests on a dream,” shows him to be as little of a theologian, as the other one just noticed shows him to be an astronomer. Joseph, to be sure, had a dream; but does it therefore follow, that no one besides had any thing else? How was it with Mary? How was it with the wise men of the east? How with the shepherds? How at the baptism, transfiguration, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of the Saviour? Christianity rest on a dream indeed! About as correct as the rest of his representations.—His off-hand blow at the Nicene Council I will parry, by observing, that the way in which they decided some books to be canonical, and some spurious, was just as *every* rational man decides between truth and falsehood, viz., by an examination of evidences, and not, like the sceptic, by jumbling all together, and rejecting them *en masse*, without examination. I suspect that my opponent will not be so sceptical as to doubt that a Nicene Council was held, notwithstanding the unimportant uncertainty relative to the date when, &c., especially if he keeps in mind what I observed in my last concerning Philo and Josephus. And, during the course of this discussion, I shall tell him who wrote the “four gospels,” so that there will be no need of his “agitating that question.”—The “veracity and sanity of the Christian fathers” I will myself venture to endorse for. I conceive Tertullian meant nothing but what I should myself be ready to say, viz., that, in a religion emanating from infinite wisdom, we short-sighted creatures are to expect to find some things which to us perchance appear shameful, absurd, and impossible; and therefore that, were the Bible to contain nothing but what is consonant with our views, we should have reason to believe it to be of human invention, and far less entitled to credit than it is now.—Respecting the ability of the unlettered fisherman to write in other

tongues than their own, why not so, as well as to *speak* in those tongues? Miracles remove mountains. It would be somewhat difficult, however, for a man to write after he was *dead*; and hence we are not to believe that "Moses wrote an account of his own death." I hope friend Owen will not forget to tell us who says he did; for I should not believe *such* a statement, credulous as *I* am. Yet, as he concludes not to speak of things of which men cannot judge without resort to books, 'tis doubtful whether we get much of an answer. How unfortunate it is that books happen to be written by men! Wonder why friend Owen writes books. Better wait till some of the wingless *angels* which his *education* scheme is to produce, shall have *been* produced, and prepared for the work. One thing, by the way, I can scarcely express my admiration of his transcendently excellent rule for detecting errors in books. It will save all the labour of searching into evidence, and would be a most expeditious mode of despatching cases in courts of justice. Mark now. It is this: Believe just as much or just as little as you please, without regard to evidence. This is what I should call settling questions by steam; and then to think how infallible a test of truth it establishes by which *all* would, *of course*, arrive at the *same* results.—My explanation of the contradictions in the Bible, noticed in my last letter, I am willing to risk; and I still say, that they do not render the Bible itself fallible, William Penn to the contrary notwithstanding.—My questions touching the world and its origin, are indeed impossible for atheists to answer, involving, as those questions do, their scheme in a labyrinth of absurdities; and this ought to suffice to make them renounce it.

I have but little more to add to what I have already said on the subject of the French revolution. In applying one sentence of my opponent's to the whole of that revolution, which he applied merely to its commencement, I was not *literally* correct. Still, I consider I was *virtually* so, inasmuch as he made other statements of a similar character, which he applied to that revolution without qualification. Speaking of that event, he says, "Never was a more noble or more unfortunate struggle to put down tyranny," &c. And he calls Lafayette the father of it. There is no distinction made here as to its different periods; and I should certainly consider these passages equivalent to calling it "a period conspicuous for truth and justice." With regard to my confounding of dates, &c., I would observe, that I have done no such thing. I have spoken of the French revolution, without regard to particular dates. I have spoken of it as an infidel concern throughout, which it was. I do not assent to the proposition, that the first months thereof were months of justice. It was then that the church of France was robbed, *Mirabeau himself* being judge. Nay, even Mignet *shows* this, whatever he may *assert* to the contrary. He shows that the property of that church had been "consecrated to the *altars*,"

not to the *government*, "by the *piety* of the *kings* and the *faithful*." Well might an infidel Mirabeau pronounce such confiscation robbery. It was more: it was sacrilege. It was then, too, that the clergy were compelled to violate their consciences by a violation of their oaths, or forfeit their means of subsistence. I deny that the Assembly of that period were an honest and a moderate public body; for they trampled on their king, and shamefully abused him, in addition to the sacrilegious robbery, &c., above noticed. I deny that the king and people met like father and children in the Champ de Mars. At that very moment, he was virtually neither more nor less than their prisoner. I deny that he broke his oath, that he manifested a haughty spirit, or that his queen was an intriguer. Such slanders befit only the venomous tongues of their infidel murderers. With regard to the worship of the goddess of reason, and the doctrine of annihilation, I say again, and I am confirmed by *all* history relating to the subject, that they were not merely *Parisian*, but *national* concerns—the blasphemous scene in the convention being but the *opening* of the impious drama. The worship of the prostitute goddess obtained for a time throughout the nation,* and the motto, "Death is an eternal sleep," was placed over the entrances to their graveyards! The work of a mere *Parisian* municipality indeed! But suppose it was so. What is gained to infidelity? Paris was the very head quarters of that—and the head quarters, too, of anarchy and bloodshed—the city, as I remarked in my last, which selected for its representatives the three infidel hell-hounds, Robespierre, Danton, and Marat. Admitted, then, for argument's sake, that the municipality of Paris were the cause of all these atrocities. What were the members of that municipality, and what were their constituents, but infidels? Nor shall I admit, contrary to all evidence, that these atrocities were instigated by foreign emissaries. No, sir; they were the spontaneous effusions of infidel benevolence, liberality, liberty, and equality! The christening of their murders and abominations with the names of republican *marriages* and *baptisms*, were evidently but sneers at the *Christian* institutions of marriage and baptism. The idea that Walter Scott is not a correct historian, because he can write novels, and has certain political opinions, is about as logical as infidel ideas in general, and requires no additional notice here.

It will be recollected, that I introduced the subject of the French revolution as one evidence of the necessity of revelation, and as proof of the pernicious influence of infidelity. And, sir, it is such evidence and such proof. Were I disposed to *invent* a tale as a confirmation of a theory, I am conscious that I could

* As to the Tammany goddess of liberty, I know not the particulars. I presume, however, that the Tammany party did not abjure the God of heaven, and worship her in his stead. If they did, there *ought* to have been a "fuss" made about it.

not produce one so much to the purpose, as is this event in history to that for which I have adduced it. The mind, after its perusal, seems as if awaking from a frightful dream. Nothing but the seal of history enstamped upon it, could ever make us regard it otherwise than as an idle tale, a figment of the imagination. Human nature seems for a time to have been changed into infernal, and men to have delighted in tormenting one another for torment's sake. There was something so inexpressibly horrible about the September massacre, the proceedings at Lyons, Nantes, and other places; nay, throughout all France, during the whole long reign of terror; something so revolting and appalling in the *sang froid* with which the guillotine was plied, and human life sacrificed, and the God of heaven defied, that it is almost difficult to believe, that devils incarnate were not for a time at the head of affairs in that ill-fated country. The French revolution, sir, will stand a beacon to all future ages, to warn mankind to beware of war with heaven—and with heaven's sacred book. Nor will they be in very great haste to turn away their eyes from a memento of so fearful import. Slow, slow will they be, again to embrace principles which have once led to such results. One such experiment outweighs a thousand arguments.

To prove the necessity of revelation, I have likewise adduced the case of ancient and modern heathen nations, and shown, that the most enlightened of them were and are sunken in the lowest depths of moral degradation, polluted with the vilest abominations, and crimsoned with the bloodiest rites; and their wisest philosophers have confessed and deplored their spiritual darkness, and have disagreed on the most obvious and important truths; that what little glimmerings of light they *have* possessed, were reflected from the sun of patriarchal, or Mosaical, or Christian revelation; that they could not bring even this to bear on the mass of mankind, unbacked as it has always been by divine authority; that this consideration has always induced them to pretend to such authority in special and important cases, thereby showing in the clearest manner the necessity of revelation; that these philosophers have inculcated demoralizing sentiments, and led immoral lives; and that, as those nations which have long been isolated from the great body of mankind, have *no* knowledge of God, there is reason to believe, that, had there never been a revelation given in any age, there would at this time be no such knowledge on the face of the earth: from which I have argued, that it is reasonable to conclude a revelation has been given, inasmuch as it is not supposable, that God would make a world of rational beings, and leave them entirely destitute of any knowledge of himself. I have shown that Christianity has a benign influence wherever it goes, overthrowing the abominations of the heathen, and civilizing and enlightening them, thereby conferring on mankind immense temporal benefits, (to say nothing of eternal ones,) which, according to the admission of Rousseau

himself, philosophy is not able to effect. I have likewise brought into view the moral phenomenon, that the Jews who had the Scriptures, inferior as they were to the Greeks and Romans in point of science and refinement, were infinitely their superiors in moral and religious knowledge. I have produced a host of infidel writers who concede, that Christianity has a goodly influence. The result of all which is, that, if any revelation has been made to mankind, it is presumable the Bible contains it. It will not, I suspect be pretended by my opponent, that any other religion can compete with that book on this point. Assuredly Paganism cannot; and as to Mahometanism, if that is true, the Bible is; for that recognises the Bible. Indeed, it is generally admitted by infidels, that Christianity has the greatest apparent claim to a divine original of any religious system whatever. Deists generally, and Herbert in particular, admit, that "Christianity has manifestly the advantage of all other pretenders to revelation, as in respect of the intrinsic excellency of the matter, so likewise in respect of the reasons that may be pleaded for its truth." And Herbert likewise denominates it the best religion. Blount says, "it is not safe to trust to deism alone, without Christianity joined to it." Hobbes calls the Scriptures the voice of God. Tindal expresses himself to the same effect. Chubb says, that Christ's mission was *probably* divine, and that the New Testament yields much clearer light than any other traditional revelation. Bolingbroke admits Christianity to be a republication of the laws of nature. Gibbon says it contains a pure, benevolent, and universal system of ethics, adapted to every duty and condition of life.

The case now stands thus: that revelation is necessary to the good of mankind, and indispensable to a knowledge of God; that it is not supposable that God, under these circumstances, would not give one; that it is therefore presumable that one has been given; and that the Bible, if any, is that revelation.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

TO ORIGEN BACHELER

LETTER VII.

September 27, 1831.

The Bible is either infallible or it is not. As proof positive of its infallibility, you are about to adduce ancient historical evidence. If we suppose the Bible story true, its truths may have come to some of our ancestors, who lived ages ago, with divine evidence; or, otherwise expressed, *as the word of God*.

But, true or not, to us it comes with historical evidence only; or otherwise expressed, *as the word of man*. The word of God, *recorded by man*, becomes, of necessity, the word of man.

But this word of man (you will argue,) may be true; and, if true, the Bible precepts are divine.

To prove the Bible true, *it is absolutely necessary to prove, by ancient history, that miracles happened*. I deny that, to a reasonable being, this is possible.

Livy informs us, (lib. 5, cap. 36, &c.,) that Rome was taken by the Gauls and delivered by Camillus. He informs us also (lib. 7, cap. 6,) that a wide gap suddenly opened in the Roman forum about the year 360 B.C.; that the oracle declared it would never close until Rome threw into it whatever she had of most precious; that Curtius, a noble Roman youth, armed himself, mounted his horse, and, declaring that there was nothing more precious than a self-devoting patriot, leaped into the gulf, which (the gods being appeased,) instantly closed over his head. Both these stories, of Camillus and of Curtius, rest on precisely the same authority, that of a historian famed for his learning and candour, and living some three or four hundred years after the events happened. Do we believe both? No. We believe Camillus' story, though some fifty years older than the other; and we disbelieve Curtius' adventure. Why? for one simple reason; *it is miraculous*. Livy's reputation as a historian, however fair, cannot weigh against a miracle. We can more readily believe in the narrator's credulity than in the narration's truth.

Thus it is demonstrated, that when the same evidence vouches for a probability and an improbability, we may receive the one and reject the other. A miracle recorded in any history but one, we disbelieve, *because it is a miracle*. We justly reason, that it is far more probable that the historian is deceived or a deceiver, than that events should happen which are utterly at variance with our own and all modern experience. And thus all your ingenious verbiage about disbelieving probabilities, and about heathen miracles being disbelieved merely because the historical evidence for them is not good, falls to the ground. Livy has as fair a reputation as any ancient historian whatever; but neither his history nor any other book (except the Bible to the Christian, the Koran to the Mahometan, the Talmud to the Jew, the Shaster to the Hindoo, and so on,) brings to any rational mind, now-a-days, even the shadow of a conviction that a miracle ever occurred.

If we saw a modern miracle ourselves, we should suspect some conjurer of a trick, or our senses of hallucination. If our nearest and dearest friend related to us a modern miracle, we should look with doubt and fear in his eyes for symptoms of insanity: and what we thus more than hesitate to believe, when seemingly attested by our senses, or the testimony we most trust upon earth, we would fain establish by records twenty

centuries back! It is, as if we had bound a giant with a cable; and, when he snapped it, still hoped to secure him with a silken thread.

I heard a Scottish highlander declare, with a voice and manner which left no doubt whatever of his sincerity, that he possessed the faculty of *second sight*,* and he related to me the instance in which he had exercised it. I disbelieved him. Why? *Second sight is a miracle.*

In Dr. Cotton Mather's† "*Magnalia Christi Americana*," he relates how New England was, in the language of that period, "exposed to war from the invisible world;" how the inhabitants were afflicted with demons, and so wrought upon by spectres, as to pine, languish and die; how the demons attacked, first one house and then another; how a spectre ship entered the port of Salem, steering in the wind's eye with her yards squared and her sails full; how some supernatural light shone upon her, and her alone; how the Rev. Zebedee Stebbin, knowing the ship to be "a device of the prestigious spirits," called on the assembled multitude to sing the 46th Psalm; how the ship sailed on, and on, and on, though no noise or voice was heard on board, until the masts and rigging suddenly fell into the sea, and the mighty spectre vanished; then again, how, a short time prior to the Indian war of 1675, noises and howlings were heard in the air, accompanied with the beating of drums as in a battle; and so on. "Flashy people," adds the doctor, "may burlesque these things, but when hundreds of the most sober people in a country where they have as much mother wit, certainly, as the rest of mankind, *know them to be true*—nothing but the absurd and froward spirit of sadducism can question them. *I have not mentioned so much as one thing that will not be justified, if it be required, by the OATHS of more consistent persons than can be found to ridicule these odd phenomena.*"

And, in truth, we have in his book, accounts of trials conducted with all the imposing forms of jurisprudence, in which many persons were convicted of holding communication with demons; and we have, what is still more remarkable, *voluntary confessions of parties acknowledging themselves in league with the devil!* So far, therefore, as the records and archives of legal courts may verify the truth of any accusation, they have verified the miracles of New England. Can we obtain for a single miracle of the Bible, evidence *on oath*—the direct evidence of hundreds of sober witnesses, as Dr. Mather said he could for his tales of wonder. Can we obtain the recorded, authenticated,

* The superstitions of the Highlanders touching this species of prophetic power are well known.

† The New England divine was a doctor of divinity; and so highly were his talents and learning in estimation, even on the European side of the Atlantic, that he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of London.

evidence of grave courts of law in proof of Christianity, as we can in proof of Salem witchcraft?

No. *If* historical evidence, clear, distinct, officially recorded, and therefore of unquestionable, and even unquestioned authenticity, *can* prove miracles, it *has* proved those of New England, and demonstrated the existence of witches, prodigies in the air, spectre ships, and fifty other romantic tales. If it cannot, what becomes of your corner-stone argument? and whereupon rests the superstructure of the believer's faith?

In the face of this mass of evidence we do not believe Cotton Mather's stories.* Why? For one simple reason: *they are miraculous.*

It is true, we know of no motive the New England divine could have to deceive; on the contrary, he was placing his character for veracity in imminent danger, by such confident appeals. Nor do we see how he and thousands of his countrymen (eye-witnesses, he says, of these miracles,) could have been deceived. Either a spectre ship did come in, in the view of Mr. Stebbin and the assembled inhabitants of Salem, or it did not. If it did not, it does seem passing strange, that the assertion that it did, should have been published, a few years thereafter, in the very country of the miracle, by an eminent divine, who appeals for its truth to the eye-witnesses themselves; and that after all this, it should remain uncontradicted to this day.

And yet, though we are unable satisfactorily to account for all this, though we cannot readily explain how the reverend gentleman could be either a deceiver or deceived, though the events happened, not two thousand, not even two *hundred* years ago, and not in some distant land but in our own country—still, still we sturdily disbelieve. Why? For the same reason that we reject the fable of the cross which Constantine and his army beheld in the air, or of the apocalypse vouchsafed to the Crusader, Godfrey;—*because these stories are all miraculous, and therefore incredible.*

If the authenticity of the Bible is to be established, you must look up some more effective vouchers than dreams† or legends, to establish it.

* I cannot consent to waste my own and our readers' time by disproving witchcraft. If any one still believes in the stories of Cotton Mather and Jack the Giant Killer, I leave the assailing of his faith to others who have more leisure and patience than I have.

† You seem to think that, in consequence of my assertion regarding the great doctrine of Christianity (the miraculous conception,) resting on a *dream*, my theological reputation is in danger. I do not think it is. Neither Mark nor John, as you are probably aware, attribute Mary's pregnancy to the Holy Ghost. Matthew gives, as his authority for so doing, a dream dreamed by Joseph; Luke, a vision seen by Mary, (Luke, chap. i., ver. 35.) I selected the former in preference, because Luke does not pretend to have been an eye-witness of any thing that he relates, whereas Matthew says that he himself was a follower of Jesus; (Matthew, chap. ix., ver. 9.

is, I pray you observe, does not (however you may have to twist it) impeach the utility of history in its proper use. I have never denied, that historical evidence may often admissable proof of what is not in itself improbable. It authorize our reasonable belief in the existence of Alexander at, but certainly not in the tale of his miraculous conception a dragon.

I think it *safer* to believe than to doubt. Upon the same principle it were safest to believe in all the religions in the world, Christian, Mahomedan, Jewish, Confucian, Hindoo, and rest; because it is but ensuring the matter by halves to believe in one only. If we believe in them all, and if one fail us, perhaps, may save.

The argument that sceptics may lose and cannot gain is a bad one, and might be urged as a plausible reason why it were well to believe, for example, in Mahometanism: seeing the Paradise of lovely gardens and cooling streams, with its singing houris and blissful pleasures, *may* be gained, if Allah only God and Mahomet be his prophet; and if Allah be not God and Mahomet be an imposter, there is no harm done, but lost. If there be not a Paradise in another world, there least, been a happy dream of anticipated joys in this.

You prefer the vision, so be it; I do not think the difference is very great.

These are the *only* two texts (so far as my memory serves me,) that substantiate the miraculous conception, The men of the East only expect a star of him who is born king of the Jews;" (Matthew, chap. ii., ver. 6.) The shepherds merely learned, that, "a saviour, which was Christ," was born to them; (Luke, chap. ii., ver. 11.) At the baptism, they only "bare record that this is the son of God;" (John, chap. i., ver. 34.)

At the transfiguration, crucifixion, and ascension, there is no more than a similar record. Not a word about the Holy Ghost, or regnancy in all this. And as to the expression "Son of God," it is only used in Genesis, chap. vi., ver. 2,) to designate those who were not thus literally conceived: while the synonymous expression "Children of God," is usually employed to signify merely good men; (Matthew, chap. v., ver. 44; Luke, chap. xx., ver. 36; Romans, chap. viii., ver. 16; chap. ix., ver. 26.) The record of a dream, then, or if you please, of a vision, is, after all, no authority which countenances the introduction of the clause "conception by the Holy Ghost" into the Christian creed; and my theological reputation escapes unharmed.

I think my astronomical reputation in greater peril. You have, I detected a verbal inaccuracy, which I might readily have avoided by a show of learning, reminding our readers of what every schoolboy knows, that the sun revolves on its axis, and likewise has (or is supposed to have) a trifling motion, less than one half its own diameter, similar to the moon's in her orbit. I do not think it material to introduce all this, in the story of Joshua, or the spirit that inspired him, was no astronomer, when he bade Phœbus delay harnessing his steeds, in lengthening into three long nights that which he spent with Alcmena,) and ordered the sun, instead of the earth, to delay his journey.

Ask me where Moses recorded his own death. In the "Fifth book of Moses," called Deuteronomy," (so in my copy of the Bible it reads,) chap. xxxiv., ver. 7.

So request my authority for speaking of the Bible as a book that was found. 2 Kings, chap. xxiii., ver. 8; 2 Chronicles, chap. xxxiv.,

But is the balance of profit and loss fairly struck? Are the chances all in favour of the religionist and all against the sceptic? Is there nothing to be thrown into the opposite scale?

Surely much. If doctrinal religion be a fallacy, it is a fallacy pregnant with mischief. It excites fears that are without foundation; it consumes valuable time that can never be recalled, and valuable talents that ought to be better employed; it draws money from the layman to support a deception; it teaches the elect to look upon their less favoured fellow-creatures as heathen men and publicans, living in sin here and doomed to perdition hereafter; it awakens harrassing doubts, gloomy despondency, and fitful melancholy: it turns our thoughts from the things of this world, where alone true knowledge is to be found: worse than all, it chains us down to antiquated orthodoxy, and forbids the free discussion of those very subjects which it most concerns us to discuss. If such a religion be a deception, its votaries are slaves.

What becomes, then, of the assertion that if the believer do not gain, he cannot lose? Is it nothing to lose time and talents, to waste our labour upon that which is not bread, and our money on that which profiteth not? Is it nothing to feel, that the human beings who surround us are the children of the devil, heirs of hell, and sons of perdition? Is it nothing to think, that we may perhaps look across the great gulf, and see some one we have loved on earth tormented in the fiery lake, and hear him ask us to dip a finger in water that it may cool his parched tongue? Is it no evil to live in disquiet by day, and in fear by night? Is it no loss to hold back when truth oversteps the line of orthodoxy; and, when there ought to be free discussion, to shrink before we know not what, afraid to go forward, lest we should go wrong? Is all this no loss? or is it not rather the loss of all that a rational being values most upon earth?

He is a bold man who endorses the doctrines of the apostolic fathers; especially if he happen to know what it is he is endorsing. What do you think of your namesake, Origen, and his opponent, Celsus' discussion, regarding power over demons? Origen, in his reply to Celsus, (chap. 6,) says; "Then Celsus says, that all the power which the Christians had was owing to the names of certain demons and their incantations of them. But this is a most monstrous calumny. For the power which Christians had was not in the least owing to enchantments, but to their pronouncing the name JESUS." Was there much, do you think, to choose between the two idle fables?

EUSEBIUS, one of the most zealous of the Christian fathers, and the writer on whom Christian divines (*Jones and Lardner*, for instance,) chiefly and most implicitly rely, heads chapter 31, of book 12, of his "*Evangelical Preparation*," thus: "HOW FAR IT MAY BE PROPER TO USE FALSEHOOD AS A MEDICINE, AND FOR THE

BENEFIT OF THOSE WHO REQUIRE TO BE DECEIVED."* He defends this, to be sure, by the example of the writers of the Old Testament. Your namesake avows the same principle;† (see Mosheim's Dissertations, p. 203.) So does CHRYSOSTOM, Bishop of Constantinople, (ibid, p. 205.)

The same doctrine is openly sanctioned by others. Bishops SYNESIUS, JEROM, GREGORY, AMBROSE, ST. AUGUSTIN, HILARY, are, as you doubtless know, also among the most illustrious fathers and most accredited historians of the church. Hear how they speak to one another.

"A little jargon," says Gregory of Nazianzen, (Bishop of Constantinople, and surnamed "The Divine,") "is all that is necessary to impose on the people. The less they comprehend, the more they admire. Our forefathers and doctors of the church have often said, *not what they thought, but what circumstances and necessity dictated to them.*"‡

"The people," says Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemais, early in the fifth century, "*are desirous of being deceived. We cannot act otherwise respecting them.*"§ And, a little farther on, he says, very honestly: "For my own part, to myself I shall always be a philosopher; but in dealing with the mass of mankind, I shall be a priest."||

St. Jerom, in mentioning a foolish story circulated by the Christians at Jerusalem, about the blood of Zacharias staining certain stones amid the ruins of the temple, says: "I do not find fault with an error which proceeds from a hatred toward the Jews and a pious zeal for the Christian faith."¶

The impartial Mosheim specially includes in the same charge, Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, and Augustin, Bishop of Hippo, in Africa, "whose fame" (says the ecclesiastical historian,) "filled, not without reason, the whole Christian world." See his "Ecclesiastical History," i., 310. "We would willingly" (these are Mosheim's quaint and honest words) "except them from this charge; but truth, which is more respect-

* I refer you to the edition of the "Evangelical Preparation" of Eusebius by Francis Viger, Paris, 1628, at p. 607.

† The celebrated Bishop Horsley, Archdeacon of St. Alban's, alludes to this in his controversy with Dr. Joseph Priestley. At page 160, he says: "Time was when the practice of using unjustifiable means to serve a good cause was openly avowed, and Origen himself was among its defenders."

‡ Hieronym. ad. Nep. St. Jerom, or Hieronymous, as he is sometimes called, acknowledged Gregory as his master.

§ Moore puts into the mouth of his "Veiled Prophet of Khorassan," when disclosing his true character to his deluded followers, a somewhat similar sentiment, though more nakedly expressed:

"There, ye wise saints, behold your light, your star;
Ye would be dupes and victims, and ye are!"

|| Cave's "Ecclesiasticæ," p. 115.

¶ Opera, tom. iv., p. 113.

able than these venerable fathers, obliges us to involve them in the general accusation."

Indeed, (as Dr. Chapman, in his "Miscellaneous Tracts," p. 191, tells us,) "The learned Mosheim, a foreign divine and zealous advocate for Christianity, who, by his writings, has deserved the esteem of all good and learned men, intimates his fears, that those who search with any degree of attention into the writings of the fathers and most holy doctors of the fourth century, will find them all, without exception, disposed to lie and deceive, whenever the interests of religion require it."*

What do you think of the source through which your infallible historical evidences have come down to us?

It needs not that I reply to your unsustained assertions touching the French Revolution. The wisdom, moderation and disinterestedness of the National Assembly of 1789-90,† the vacillating weakness of Louis, the intriguing spirit of his unfortunate wife, the base interference of foreign courts, to ruin the fair hopes of liberty—all these are facts as universally admitted by the well informed among Europeans at the present day as any which modern history records. *Every one of these was confirmed to me, in personal conversation by General Lafayette himself,‡ who*

* Lest you may imagine that Dr. Chapman unfairly quotes Mosheim, I refer you to his "*De rebus Christianis ante Constantinum Magnum*." In Vidal's translation of that work, vol. i., p. 285, note o, Mosheim's words are: "At a time when he (Kermas) wrote, it was an established maxim with many of the Christians, that it was pardonable in an advocate for religion to avail himself of fraud and deception, if it was likely they would conduce toward the attainment of any considerable good." And again, speaking of the forged writings attributed to Kermas Trismegistus, he says: "It appears, from evidence beyond all exception, that a pernicious maxim, current in the schools of the Egyptians, Platonists, Pythagoreans, and Jews, became early recognized by the Christians, and soon found among them numerous patrons, namely, that they who made it their business to deceive with a view of promoting the cause of truth, were deserving rather of commendation than censure."

He has collected proof on proof of this, in his "*De turbata per recentiores Platonicos Ecclesia*."

Nothing but a consciousness that these things could not be denied or evaded with any regard to his historical reputation for veracity, would have wrung such confessions from so sincere a Christian and erudite a historian as Mosheim, a historian whose accuracy and impartiality are as firmly established as those of any writer in the whole range of literature.

The learned Dodwell, in his "*Dissert. de Paucit. Martyr.*," abstains from producing more proofs of ancient Christian forgeries, "through his great veneration for the goodness and piety of the fathers."

+ Walter Scott himself attributes to their very ultra-scrupulousness, in decreeing that they should not be re-eligible to office, much of the excesses of '93 and '94.

‡ In speaking of the Girondists, and of her who was their soul and leader, the amiable and gifted Madame Roland, the general remark is to me: "We understood not each other. Had I been acquainted with Madame Roland in the early days of our French Revolution, or had I then duly appreciated the noble character which I learned to value when she was no more, I have sometimes thought that our struggle for independence might have had a happier termination."

with an enthusiasm that moistened the old patriot's eyes, the same revolution which you pronounce to be "infidel out." It is of no avail, therefore, for an apologist of democracy* to call them "slanders of venomous tongues."

Sceptics were the most active in that great struggle for truth. And in what democratic struggle have they not been conspicuous? To go no farther than the history of this

What were the leaders in the American revolution? Was Jefferson, the penner of the immortal Declaration? Was John Adams, whose eloquence probably decided the fate of our republic? What Franklin, that most practical of binary philosophers? What Ethan Allen, the hero of the North? Nay, is not Washington's orthodoxy far more than able to stand up to the French revolution was "infidel through- out" more the American. If scepticism is to be abused for the sake of the failure of the one, let her at least have credit for the success of the other.

Mr. Horne spoke truth: democracy and scepticism do go hand in hand. At this very moment, in France, in England, and in Europe, the *liberals* are arrayed on one side, and the *party* on the other. Reform is opposed to religion, and orthodoxy hang together; the sceptre plants the flag at the cross may sanctify the sceptre. It has ever been so now. Cite to me one solitary instance in which a party ever supported political reform, or one in which a party ever opposed it.

I draw this letter to a conclusion. I need not advert to the proof of the necessity of revelation, built up as it is on the same unshaken assumptions, except to ask you to reconcile yourselves to the same.

By this term I mean simply one who defends the conduct of the French revolutionaries, during the great struggle, against that of the National Convention and French people.

In the works of Jefferson, (vol. iv., p. 512,) we find the following extract from his journal of February 1, 1800.

Mr. Rush told me that he had it from Asa Green, that when the late General Washington on his departure from the government, conferred in their consultation, that he had never, on any occasion, addressed the public which showed a belief in the Christian religion, and that they should so pen their address as to force him at length to publicly whether he was a Christian or not. They did so. However, said, the old fox was too cunning for them. He answered every one of their address particularly, except that, which he passed over with silence. Rush observes, he never did say a word on the subject in any of his papers, except in his valedictory letter to the governors of the State when he resigned his commission in the army, wherein he speaks of the benign influence of the Christian religion."

Now that Gouverneur Morris, who pretended to be in his secrets, and himself to be so, has often told me, that General Washington became more of that system than he himself did."

in Letter I.

That "Nature does teach a God, and that the heathen are therefore without excuse for worshipping idols."

and in Letter VII.

That "Revelation is indispensable to a knowledge of God."

It is a powerful argument against the reforming efficacy of the Bible, that public opinion is still, even at this day, so unenlightened.

I have never said that laws have no influence. As soon as you show me what a discussion respecting suicide has to do with the question before us, we will enter upon it.

Experience makes men wise. As it increases in age, therefore the world increases in wisdom also. It is idle assumption to attribute all this natural improvement to any pseudo-sacred book.

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

LETTER VIII.

New-York, September 17, 1831.

SIR,

It should be remembered, that the question under discussion is not the *infallibility*, but the *authenticity*, of the Bible. To say that nothing short of *infallible* testimony entitles a thing to credence, is at once to embrace universal scepticism; for, what but human testimony has any history, or any passing event which we do not ourselves witness? I shall, however, show that the Bible does not depend solely on this testimony. Nor shall I assent to the proposition, that such testimony renders the word of God *man's* word. If another individual were to relate what I had said to him, those words of mine would not become his; I should still remain their author.

But the greatest obstacle to the admission of the Bible by sceptics, appears to be its miracles. Yet, what is there incredible in miracles, in themselves considered? All who do not absolutely *deny* a God—even the *finite* God of Plato—must admit that, for aught they hold to the contrary, miracles are *possible*. And, limited as they are in wisdom, they must likewise admit, that they know not but they are called for by the interests of the universe. Moreover, it is reasonable to suppose, that a revelation from God to man *would* be accompanied by miracles,

confirm the same. And, in accordance with this idea, we find the Jews requiring of the Saviour this very evidence of his divine mission. The Bible, then, is more credible *as a revelation*, than if it did not pretend to miracles. Indeed, revelation itself is a miracle; and hence, to object to it *because* it contains an account of miracles, is the height of absurdity. The *atheist* is the only individual who can consistently reject miracles—and from bare credulity. He *believes* there is *no God* to perform them, and consequently *believes* that things *do themselves*. Miracles performed by any *being* are not half incredible enough for him. If you want *him* to believe a book, just insert therein the *self-performing impossibility*—some real Munchausen stories—and he's your man, for all the world. But that *deists* or *non-angarians* should make miracles an objection to revelation, is on their part a very inconsiderate absurdity.

Miracles, then, *in themselves considered*, are not incredible. Their credibility or incredibility, therefore, depends on the evidence by which they are sustained. The rule, that we are not to believe in the Bible miracles, because some other accounts of supernatural events are incredible, goes to destroy all discrimination between truth and falsehood, history and fable, and is as much as to say, that one thing is false because another is. This rule is inadmissible. Now, as to the Bible miracles, they stand on ground peculiarly their own. They were of a tangible kind, which there was no possibility of deception: as, for example, the deluge; the confusion of tongues; the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; the plagues of Egypt; the parting of the Red Sea and Jordan; the stopping of the sun and its retrogression; the healing of the sick, the lame, and the blind; the raising of the dead; the speaking with new tongues, &c., &c. These tangible miracles were performed in the presence not only of friends, but of sharp-sighted enemies, who did not pretend to deny them, but attributed them to the agency of the devil. They were recorded by eye-witnesses, and, by being recorded in the periods in which they occurred, were open to disproof, if they could be disproved. And they are confirmed by surviving monuments and institutions, and by universal history and tradition. Have the miracles of Livy all these evidences? By no means. As he lived three or four hundred years after they are said to have happened, he was, of course, not so much as an eye-witness; and however faithful a *historian* he might have been, he could only write in relation to them on the authority of others; and how veracious they were, would remain to be considered. At all events, we *do not* reject his account of these things because they are miraculous, but because they lack proof. So we reject any other prodigy whatever on this account. If the Salem witchcraft has nothing else against it, it must stand. Those however who reject this, *give* other reasons. But bare assertion, that "modern knowledge shows it to have been impossible," is not one of those reasons; for this goes as

much against Bible witchcraft, as against Salem witchcraft is incumbent on my opponent, therefore, to make good assertion, or retract it. I call upon him, then, once more the one or the other; for it concerns a proposition of the Let us, therefore, hear no more about Jack the Giant-Kill see this case fairly met.

It is worthy of observation, that my opponent has, in letter, exploded one of his own positions. He says believe the story of Camillus, though some fifty years old that of Curtius. Thus it seems, that mere length of time not lessen the credibility of a thing. Still more worthy is it, that he abandons what he has all along considered evidence, viz., the evidences of his senses. He would, it sooner doubt his senses, than believe in a miracle. We if one's own senses are not infallible evidence, we may, ing to *his own rule* relative to infallibility, as well under prove nothing, present or past; and he would do better forward, not to lay such stress on what he calls *knowledge experience*. But this rule, after all, is very absurd. would he doubt his senses, rather than believe in a miracle. Do they tell him there can be none? This they can. But if they could, why not doubt them in this case, as in the other? Does his *reason* tell him there can be none? His reason is *limited* and *fallible*, and is founded on his senses or experience. By what rule, then, would he reject a miracle, if witnessed by himself—a miracle of the Bible? By what rule would he reject *such* a miracle, *attested* miracles of that book are? The testimony in *their* favour much stronger than mere judicial oaths, or the *confessions* of those individuals in the Salem witchcraft concern, as, in their own showing, were under the influence of the *father* of the miracle, for it is the testimony of enemies as well as of friends. I do not now enter into the merits of that case. I would merely say that neither the Salem witchcraft, nor any other marvel of a kind that stands on the same ground in point of evidence, as do the evidences of the Bible. Not a single instance can be produced containing *all* the kinds of evidence which *they* do. And, though all other supernatural tokens fail, the Scripture may stand unshaken.

With regard to the miraculous birth of the Saviour, the Bible treats not on the subject at all, and, of course, does not mention it. He notes, however, the miraculous occurrences at his birth, showing him to have been a divine personage. But as well as Matthew and Luke, *does* speak of his miraculous birth, "In the beginning," says he, "was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Nor is it said that he had a *vision* on the subject. Her interview with Gabriel is described as literal, and is not denominated a vision; and he had his account from "the followers of Jesus." But if

a vision, it would be none the less to be depended on on account; for a vision is of a sacred nature. And so are *visions* as Matthew describes Joseph and the wise men to *ad*; as would seem from their proving literally true.

The miraculous conception of the Saviour was foretold *h*, hundreds of years before his birth. Nor is the appellation of God, applied to others. The Jews considered his *himself* thus to have been blasphemy, making himself equal *d*. But my opponent seems not to consider the purport *former* proposition. That was, that the *superstructure of* *nity* depended on a dream. But *that* does by no means *merely* on these accounts of the *miraculous conception*. *pearance* of the star and the angels at the Saviour's birth, the Holy Ghost at his baptism, together with the utter-*a* voice from heaven on the latter occasion, announcing *hip*; the utterance of a similar voice at his transfiguration, *appearance* of Moses and Elias at that time, as also *isfiguration* itself; the utterance of a voice to his glory on *asion* in Jerusalem; the acknowledgment of his divine *er* by the demons whom he exorcised; the miracles he *t*, admitted even by his enemies; his own claims to *; the* wondrous scenes exhibited at his crucifixion, extort-*confession* of his sonship from his crucifiers; his resur-*and* ascension; and the fulfilment of his predictions; all, *are* him to have been a divine being, and his doctrine from

rather singular, that a man who pretends to criticise the *mical* knowledge of Joshua, should not know, that, in *o* have the earth stand still, it is necessary to stop the sun *n* with, and consequently, that the command of Joshua *t* only adapted to the ideas of the people, but perfectly in *uice* with astronomy—nay, just as we in this day should *ourselves* in a similar case, notwithstanding all our astro-*l* knowledge.

ould advise my opponent to read the account of the death of *once* more. Will he just *quote* the passage which says that *orded* his own death? and likewise the passages in Kings *ronicles* to which he has referred me, for proof that the *was* lost and found?

e it not a conceded point on the part of sceptics, that *anity*, if any, is the true religion, and that no other reli-*an* for one moment compete with it in point of apparent *ce*, it would then be to the purpose to talk of Judaism, *etanism*, &c. But even in such a case, it would be a *course*, to adopt them all, inasmuch as that, being con-*ory* one to another, they cannot all be true. The proper *d* to be adopted in a case of this nature, would be, to ex-*the* pretensions of all, and embrace that one which should *be* best. Yet, were the question merely between scepti-*and any one religion whatever*, involving, as all religions do,

eternal consequences in the adoption or rejection of the same, it would be the most reckless infatuation, not to examine the subject with the deepest attention, and incline to the religious side as the safe one, even in case the weight of evidence on each were equal, and the scales were not to preponderate either way. What madness, then, to reject Christianity, against all its overwhelming mass of unanswerable evidences, because, perchance, we do not *know* it to be true, and rush into a state of unproven unbelief, unsatisfying *if* true, fatal if not so! Nay, if religion is a *dream*, it is a pleasing one, and is so much clear and blissful gain to man on earth, without any risk. "Why will any man," says Addison, "be so impertinently officious, as to tell me all this is fancy and delusion? Is there any merit in being the messenger of ill news? If it is a dream, let me enjoy it, since it makes me both the happier and the wiser man. Were it possible for any thing in the Christian faith to be erroneous, I can find no ill consequences in adhering to it. The infidel himself must allow, that no other system could so effectually contribute to the heightening of morality." And even Byron, with all his dark and gloomy scepticism, had the candour to make the following confession. "Indisputably, the firm believers in the gospel have a great advantage over all others—for this simple reason, that, if true, they will have their reward hereafter; and if there be no hereafter, they can be but with the infidel in his eternal sleep, having had the assistance of an exalted hope through life, without subsequent disappointment, since, (at the worst for them,) 'out of nothing, nothing can arise,' not even sorrow." I do not pretend, sir, that this is evidence of the *truth* of religion. I speak now merely of its consolations. And, in this respect, *all* religions are superior to cold and cheerless scepticism. Man needs religion even in *this* life, to sustain him under his load of trials and afflictions. Yea, the prospect of annihilation, to a rational mind, has in it something dread and appalling. To cease to be; to cease to know; to cease to exercise our intellectual faculties—and that forever! Who that ever realized intellectual pleasures and the sweets of existence, does not shudder at the thought? And as to the fears excited by religion, the good man has them not, and the bad man needs them as a check; so that it is one of the *strongest recommendations* of religion, that it is a "terror to evil doers." The time, the talents, the money, devoted to the subject, are vastly overbalanced by its good effects on society, to say nothing of futurity. Thus it is of immense advantage to the world in a temporal point of view. It does *not* turn our thoughts from social duties, but affords a most powerful incentive to vigilance therein. It does *not* forbid the discussion of *any* subject, or hold us back from following *truth*, lead where she may; but on the contrary, it directs us to "prove *all* things, and hold fast that which is good." And there is no risk of a *hell* in believing it, supposing scepticism to be true. *This* was the *risk* of which

in comparison with which, all temporal losses, even that self, are not worth naming.

last, I said, in view of the quotation made by my opponent Tertullian, that I would endorse for the veracity and the Christian fathers. But what he has adduced since, is another concern. The allowing of falsehood by the fathers of the church in certain cases, I should approve. Sceptics in general, however, and my opponent, need not urge this as an objection against us. He justifies sceptics in contesting their real sentiments passing for believers when they are not. As to the of Origen, that miracles were performed in the name of us is no falsehood. And here I would call the special of the reader to what Celsus said, viz., that Christ performed miracles by the power of magic; by which he admits *did* perform them. This admission from a bitter enemy of Christianity, shows that the miracles of Christ were past dispute. This is but one of many admissions of the kind, as I shall show. But suppose some of the Christian fathers had a Jesuitic rule touching deception in certain cases? Is this? This does not invalidate the *Scriptures*. They did not have these, nor had they the power of making alterations and they been so disposed; for they were not in their hands, but scattered abroad, and in the hands of all, even enemies. Hence we find Celsus and many other opponents of Christianity quoting from them. What then becomes the argument, that the Bible is unworthy of credit, because the early fathers thought it allowable to practise deception in certain cases?—My assertions relative to the French revolution are not unsustained, if authentic historical evidence can say any thing. The National Assembly of 1789-90 robbed the Anglican church, Mirabeau being judge, and likewise violated the rights of conscience in the case of the clergy. It was indeed not so bad as the National Convention, in which the infidel Jacobins obtained unbounded sway. But it is remembered, that there are *bad*, *worse*, and *worst*. As to the weakness of Louis, that was not a crime, but a misfortune. His weakness consisted in his yielding to the blood-hounds of the revolution, as well as Jacobins, who took his life. The "in-

regard to the Girondists, I shall not concede that they were the high my opponent pretends. They were indeed *not so bad as the* but this is not saying much in their favour. "It will be says Scott, to the disgrace of their pretensions to stern republicanism, that the Girondists were willing to employ, for the accomplishment of their purpose, those base and guilty tools which afterward effected destruction; or, in the words of the satirist,

"For letting rapine loose, and murder,
To rage just so far, but no further;
And setting all the land on fire,
To burn to a scantling, but no higher."

triguing" of his wife consisted in her attempts to counteract that weakness, and save that life. Most wonderful intriguing this! With regard to the interference of foreign courts, I have not asserted, to the contrary. I have only said, that this interference did not occasion the infernal scenes of bloodshed and abomination exhibited under the sanction of the rulers and people of France. And as to Lafayette's approbation of that revolution as it was managed, we know to the contrary. He was neither of the Girondist nor Jacobin party, but of that of the constitution; who were for a limited monarchy. And of that party he remains up to this day—that is, so far as relates to France. No doubt his eyes are "moistened" when speaking of that revolution. He remembers the guillotine, and his flight from his country to avoid it. And it was the sickening horror which the recollection of that engine of murder induced within his bosom, that made him raise his voice in behalf of the life of Polignac. But do not mistake me. I am no "apologist of legitimacy." "*Born, sir, in a land of liberty,*" it is *natural* that I should prefer a republic to a monarchy; and I do so. If, however, the denouncing of the murders of the infidel French Jacobins, is to be an apology of legitimacy, then the American people are so; for the outrages of the former French revolution are very generally reprobated in this country. Nor do we consider that revolution a struggle for liberty, but a struggle between infidel demagogues for power, and a piratical crusade against the world. We have not forgotten when an impudent French directory had the audacity even to demand tribute from us; and when our Washington was called from his retirement, to lead our forces against those foes of the human race. But the lame attempt of my opponent to prove those petty infidel tyrants to have been republican patriots, is not so *flagrantly outrageous*, as his statement that Washington and the master spirits of our revolution were *sceptics*. A more wanton and unfounded *calumny* was never penned. Washington a sceptic. Americans, sir, will treat this *libel* with its merited indignation. Washington was the principal supporter of an episcopal church in the vicinity of Mount Vernon. The anecdote of Potts, the friend, discovering him at prayer in a grove, for the success of the American arms, is too familiar to people in general to need repeating here. In Hosack's Life of Clinton, is the following anecdote. "While the American army, under the command of Washington, lay encamped in the environs of Morristown, N. J., it occurred that the service of the communica-

They were men who stopped not at means, no matter what kind, to attain their ends, although they did not, like the Jacobins, kill *for the sake of killing*. Besides, they were totally void of moral courage, and at the time of the horrid massacre of September, when they were the only party in the Legislative Assembly that had the power to give it a check, they looked timidly on, issuing no decree, demanding no force, to arrest the work of butchery perpetrated on defenceless prisoners by two or three hundred public murderers! Such were the "brave" noble Girondists.

(there observed semi-annually only,) was to be administered in the presbyterian church of that village." In a morning of the previous week, the general, after his accustomed inspection of the camp, visited the house of the Rev. Dr. Jones, then pastor of that church, and, after the usual preliminaries, accosted him:—"Doctor, I understand that the Lord's supper is to be celebrated with you next Sunday; I would learn if it accords with the canons of your church to admit communicants of another denomination." The doctor rejoined—"Most certainly; ours is not the presbyterian table, general, but the Lord's table; and we hence give the Lord's invitation to all his followers of whatever name." The general replied, "I am glad of it; that is as it ought to be; but as I was not quite sure of the fact, I thought I would ascertain it from yourself, as I propose to join with you on that occasion. Though a member of the church of England, I have no exclusive partialities." The Doctor re-assured him of a cordial welcome, and the general was found seated with the communicants the next Sabbath. Strange deism this! In his farewell address to the American people, he expresses himself on this wise: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labour to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with public and private felicity. Let it be simply asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation ~~desert~~ the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect, that national morality can prevail, in exclusion of religious principle." Hear this, ye reckless speculators in moonshine sentimentality,—Hear a Washington pronouncing you to be void of patriotism, and dangerous members of society! And yet, have ye the audacity to claim him as one of yourselves, on the mere *round-about supposition* of an infidel, when the whole life, public and private, of that illustrious individual, gives that supposition the lie? Sooner, sooner far, would I believe Jefferson or Jefferson's author, Morris, a false calumniator, than Washington a hypocrite. There is one sentence in the extract from the address just quoted which deserves special note. It is this: "Reason and *experience* both forbid us to expect, that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle." Washington uttered not this sentiment merely as an *opinion*, but as a matter of *experience*. He uttered it at the very period the *experiment was making in France*. There, religion had been discarded, and national

morality went with it.—Now for Franklin. He attributed ^{the} course of usefulness which he pursued, to the influence of a book written by the *Salem-witchcraft man*, Cotton Mather, entitled "Essays to do Good." And in the first Congress of the United States, he made the following motion: "I beg leave to move, that henceforth prayers, imploring the assistance of heaven, and its blessings upon our deliberations, be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business; and that one or more of the *clergy* of this city be requested to officiate in that service." This motion he said he urged, after having alluded to the slow progress which was made by Congress in political matters, "from the convincing proofs which he had seen, *that God governs in the affairs of men*. And if not a sparrow falls to the ground without, is it probable that an empire can rise without, his aid? We have been assured in the sacred writings, that except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. This I firmly believe; and I also believe that, without his concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel. And mankind may hereafter from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing governments by human wisdom, and leave it to chance, war, and conquest." Thus Franklin. As to Jefferson, *even he* was not one of your thorough-going *French* infidels. He could say, in view of slavery, "I tremble for my country, when I reflect that God is just, and that his justice will not sleep for ever." He was quite as *religious* as *Robespierre*, whom my opponent attempted to turn off upon the Christian side. But it seems he was not sufficiently so for Congress, who altered his draft of the declaration of independence, and gave it a *more religious tone*. And "what was John Adams?" A member of a congregational church, if I mistake not. And so was Samuel Adams, his brother—Samuel Adams, the patriot who had the high honour of being proscribed with John Hancock, by the British king, in the same act which proclaimed pardon to all the rest! But there was Ethan Allen—and what of him? Why, quite an infidel in fair weather; but let a storm of affliction come, and quickly would he quail. When his dying daughter asked him which she should believe, his doctrine or her mother's, he replied, "Believe your mother." Well, sir, who next? Suppose I should myself introduce one. There was Patrick Henry, whose daring eloquence in the Virginian House of Burgesses, gave the first impetus to the ball of revolution. In a letter to his daughter, in 1796 he says: "The view which the rising greatness of our country presents to my eyes, is greatly tarnished by the general prevalence of deism, which with me is but another name for vice and depravity. I am, however, much consoled by reflecting that the religion of Christ has, from its first appearance in the world, been attacked in vain, by all the wits, philosophers, and wise ones, aided by every power of man; and its triumph has been complete. What is there in the wit or wis-

dom of the present deistical writers or professors, that can compare them with Hume, Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke, and others? And yet these have been confuted, and their fame is decaying; insomuch that the puny efforts of Paine are thrown in to prop their tottering fabric, whose foundations cannot stand the test of time." In his will, he left this testimony in favour of the Christian religion:—"I have now disposed of all my property to my family; there is one thing more I wish I could give them, and that is the Christian religion. If they had this, and I had not given them one shilling, they would be rich; and if they had not this, and I had given them all the world, they would be poor." Thus the immortal Henry. Who comes next? Suppose we take our patriots by the wholesale. Suppose we take into view the character of the AMERICAN PEOPLE at the period of our revolution. As late as the time of Washington's inauguration, Dr. Franklin, who was then in Europe, gave the following description of this country, for the information of those who thought of emigrating hither; "Serious religion, under its various denominations, is not only tolerated, but respected and practised. Atheism is unknown; infidelity rare and secret; so that persons may live to a great age in this country, without having their piety shocked, by meeting with either an atheist or an infidel." Such, sir, were the rulers, such the people, who achieved our independence—men how unlike the infidel anarchists of France at the time of *her* revolution! And it is insufferable, that a stranger to the genius of our institutions, to our national character, and to our history, should come among us, thus to misrepresent and slander our progenitors.

He asks me to cite one instance, in which a church party ever supported political reform. I refer him then to our own revolution. I refer him to the declaration of the infidel Hume, touching the Puritans, viz., that liberty in England took its rise with them, and that they were its zealous supporters. I refer him to the Protestants of France, whom he himself has represented as the friends of liberty. I refer him to pure Evangelism wherever it prevails; and now I ask him to point me to one infidel cabal that are not real anarchists. Bishop Horne *did* indeed speak truth. *French* "democracy and atheism went hand in hand;" but, as I have already said, and as I have shown in this letter, *that* was not *American* democracy. No, it was not *true* democracy. It was a state of petty tyranny, from which the gigantic despotism of Napoleon was a comparatively happy relief.

After the proofs which I have given of the necessity of revelation, to hear my opponent denominate them "naked assumptions," is truly queer. My propositions which he has placed in juxta-position, are not discordant, as he would seem to suppose. Taken in the connexion in which they were written, it will be seen that they signify neither more nor less than this: that nature is sufficient to teach the existence of a God, and therefore that men are without excuse for worshipping idols; but

that, inasmuch as they *do* worship them, and do *not* learn to nature the divine existence, revelation becomes necessary in one sense, indispensable, to such knowledge: that is they *will* not attain to this knowledge without revelation, they *might* or *not*.

It is a most marvellous argument against the Bible, that who *do not make it their rule*, hold unenlightened opinions, follow vicious courses. This is logic with a witness. What then would be their opinions and practices if they *make it their rule*? And this is the *candour* of *sceptics*—they rake and scrape together all the *deviltry* of an ungodly world, their own included, and then bandy it about as the *morals* of Christendom, and the “*morals of Christian cities*,” to condemn devil themselves, and then hold up their own conduct as evidence that *the Bible* has a very bad influence. Wonder men *these*. Will they just tell us how bad *infidelity* makes men who *don't embrace that*? But then we are told, that *sent* religion *ought* to be efficacious, and make all men wise. Indeed! How do they know this? Are they Gods? Do they know just how much influence *infinite wisdom* can see fit to exert in this case? How wise are these gentlemen at once, for men who “*know nothing about it*” at another time? Wise as they are, however, they seem not to consider that God has a little *reason* and *agency* of *his own* to exercise. No man can be *rationally accountable* beings, they use a deal of logic to show that they have *no* reason, and to prove that they are brutes; and, for my part, I do not feel much disposed to dispute their doctrine, so far as relates to themselves.

The argument against the efficacy of a belief in *future punishment*, is equivalent to saying, that “*laws have no influence*.” If the terrors of time are efficacious in restraining men from crime, the terrors of eternity much more.

The question of suicide has *this* concern with our subject, viz., that the heathen sages, without the light of revelation, thought it an allowable deed. Please *now* to estimate its merits.

I will let Rousseau reply to my opponent, touching the improvement of mankind without revelation, seeing that authority will probably weigh more with him than with me. He says, “The solid authority of modern governments and the less frequent revolutions, are incontestably due to Christianity. It has rendered governments themselves less sanguinary. This is proved by facts, on comparing them with ancient governments. Religion, better understood, excluding fanaticism, given more mildness to Christian manners. This character is the work of letters; for wherever they have flourished, it has not been more respected on their account; of the cruelties of the Athenians, of the Egyptians, of the emperors, and of the Chinese, are so many proofs.” But on this point.

ive, as I conceive, clearly shown that revelation is necessary; that it is reasonable to suppose God has given one; and if one has been given, it is the Bible. I have considered the claims of that book in this respect, so far as relates to the Jews. Before proceeding to the consideration of its other claims, I will just remark, that the circumstance, that such men as Bacon, Newton, Locke, and Milton, have been believers in the Bible, after the most thorough examination, it cannot, whether true or false, be that *grossly* absurd, whimsical, self-contradictory idea which sceptics pretend, but is entitled to the most respectful and thorough examination; the more especially, as some of the most distinguished infidels, with all their feelings and prejudices directed against it, have, by such examination, become convinced of its truth: likewise that, as its opposers are generally of immoral habits, it leads to a suspicion, that the ground of their unbelief is a feeling of hostility towards its holy precepts and fearful sanctions, rather than any solid reasons against its authenticity; which idea seems to be confirmed, by the death-cries and recantations of some of their number. Having now remitted, I will proceed to the consideration of its remaining claims.

Prophecy is one, and a most important one, of those evidences of the Bible, which has recorded hundreds of years before being fulfilled—prophecy, which is even fulfilling before our own eyes. This would be sufficient to prove the Bible divine, were there no other evidence. Internal evidence is another proof. The Bible contains evidence of this description, sufficient to satisfy the candid mind. The writers give the dark as well as the light side of the story. An air of sincerity and truth prevails throughout. It contains *apparent discrepancies*, which shows that the writers did not act in concert; and yet it contains real unity, which shows that they must have drawn from reality, as they did without collusion. Names, dates, and places, are given, the scenes being fearlessly laid in the midst of the real world, claiming credence, courting investigation, and not evading contradiction. The *diversity* of its style proves it to have had different authors. Its *gradations* of style from that of the most simple to the most refined, exhibiting language in its infancy, manhood, and age, show it to have been written in the different ages of the world pretended. The obscurity of many of its allusions and expressions, showing its writers to have been ignorant of customs and localities to us unknown, bespeaks antiquity. The references from one book to another show that one was in circulation before another. The different dates of the various books prove them to have been written by the authors of different countries. Numerous incidental coincidences between the different authors, such as occur only between contemporaries. There is nought of the style fictitious, in cases where the circumstances would not have permitted contradiction, as at the creation of the world, for example; which shows

that truth, not fiction, must have been the object of the writers. The sublimity of its style, the grandeur of its conceptions, and the nature and excellence of its doctrines, prove it to be superhuman. It contains many things which to our limited wisdom appear unwise, just as a religious system coming from *infinite* wisdom must necessarily appear; and, in thus corresponding with the system of nature, it shows that it was derived from the same source. It claims just the kind of evidence of its divine original which men need to convince them thereof, viz., miracles and prophecy. And, to crown all, it produces on the mind a hallowed influence, in perusing its sacred pages.

The consideration of some additional kinds of evidence is postponed to a future number.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

TO ORIGEN BACHELER.

LETTER VIII.

September 24, 1831.

Be the Scriptures authentic or not, they are but a human record of a divine revelation; a man-translated transcript of the word of God. This is what I have said, and what I presume you will not deny. It is a distinction important to be borne in mind.

"MIRACLE"—says Johnson, "an effect above human or natural power, performed in attestation of some truth;" and the lexicographer's definition agrees with your views of the vast importance of miracles, to prove that the Bible precepts are from God.

I deny that a miracle can prove to man the divine origin of any precept, or the truth of any assertion.*

If we imagine an occurrence clearly and distinctly out of nature, and above human agency, we may suppose it to attest to us *super-natural* agency; but how are we to decide whether that agency be *divine* or *Satanic*?

Suppose we might rationally believe, on the authority of men who lived two thousand years ago, the occurrence of phenomena which we should suspect for juggler tricks, if they happened under our own eyes at the present day. Suppose we might

* I might speak of the extreme difficulty of sometimes deciding what is a miracle. The explosion of gunpowder is universally received by rude savages (the first time they witness it) as a miracle; and modern science furnishes us with natural explanations of fifty phenomena, which, to our unenlightened ancestors, appeared miraculous. But this difficulty I wave.

word belief to ancient stories that obtained credence as of witchcraft and second-sight, and have been handed as through ages of craft and ignorance, to contradict powerful analogical evidence which our senses can

Nay, suppose much more than all this. Suppose of light and beauty coming down to us on a summer surrounded by glory too bright for our mortal eyes, ting in a voice of music that should ravish our mortal imagine the electrical effect which such a vision would

Think how present and positive would be the evidence supernatural agency to any which *can* exist in legends. Think how many hundreds would believe and for one who believes and trembles now. Conceive mighty and ever-present influence which such a being exert over mankind, from the rudest savage to the sage; bending all hearts to his will and all knees in his

then in such a case, when every thing which can now for revelation by her most devoted believers, might with ten-fold force—even then, what security could that this being, in the semblance of an angel of light not a demon of darkness? that his power were not the power of an artful fiend, and his counsel the counsel of a serpent? Almost all nations that have imagined spirits of good and evil, have imagined two, a spirit of good and a spirit of evil. And orthodox Christianity has her God and her devil. But, if we may credit the stories she tells of him, is very subtle, very rebellious, and withal very successful in rebellion. In very defiance of his maker, he deceived (so the tale) our first mother, under the form of a serpent; by the exertion of wily craft he so marred the fair work of God, that it repented the great architect that he had made man at all.* Can we declare it to be impossible, that he deceive us, her posterity, under the form of an angel, and defeat the benevolent purposes of God, by deceiving and misleading man?

then, shall man distinguish between *celestial* and *infernal* miracles? If miracles are wrought before our eyes, to ascertain precepts, how shall we mortals decide whether they come to us from heaven or hell? You will perhaps reply *the nature and practical consequences of the precept.* But we could—then to what purpose a miracle, if, after all, we judge for ourselves whether the command be just or

the every Bible miracle proved as clearly as any proposition of Euclid; what have we gained? In opening the book, we are still to decide between God's and the devil's authority. But we *can* decide, you will say; it bears the internal

* Genesis, chap. vi., ver. 6.

stamp of a divine origin. To me it does not—but grant it did. Can we not suppose the evil one writing a book, which, to our weak and sinful nature, should bear the semblance of a divine stamp? Can we not imagine the father of lies, getting up a clever forgery? mixing in, amid his devilish suggestions, just sufficient appearance of goodness and wisdom, to blind our eyes and cheat our judgments? On the supposition of the book's supernatural origin, we *cannot deny* that this may be so.

Thus, even when records appear the most authentic, and precepts the most divine, and when they are attested by undisputed miracles, the evidence that they are from God must ever appear, to any reflecting mind that entertains the idea of a devil full of zeal and of power to deceive, most slender and unsatisfactory.

What shall we say, then, when the miracles are disputed if not disproved? when the records are repugnant to reason, and the precepts at variance with our moral sense? when, for instance, we hear of fifty thousand women and children slaughtered in one day? or read a command to “save alive none that breatheth?”

It is from the *internal evidence alone*, recollect, that we can decide this matter. And what says the internal evidence of the Midianite massacre? IF MAN CAN IMAGINE A DEVILISH DEED, THAT WAS ONE!

To prove—positively *prove*—the supernatural origin of the Bible, then, is not to prove that we ought to believe its history or obey its commands. Our human reason, after all, is, in every case, the judge—yes, the *sole* judge, whether a precept be good or bad, and whether it ought to be received or rejected. It follows, that miracles, if they really happened, would be both insufficient and superfluous.

So much for the *utility* of miracles. As to their *credibility*, it might almost suffice to reflect, that marvels and prodigies have seldom been seen but at night, when men's eyes are of little use, or read of except in dark ages long gone by, when men's faith was excited and deceived by oracles and astrologers. A ghost cannot bear the rays of the sun, nor a miracle the light of modern knowledge. Every generation sees less of prodigies than its predecessors. Our grandfathers and grandmothers believed much more firmly in spirits, and haunted castles, and churchyard gholes, than we, their incredulous posterity. Divination is on the wane, and modern prophecies are to be found only in the romance or the almanack. Or, if some stray marvel approach our own times, it is usually scoffed at as spurious, or rejected as absurd.

And this brings me to speak of the relative force of evidence for the Bible and for Salem witchcraft. Did we not know the power of early prepossessions, it might well appear to us incredible, that any man, in his senses, should outrage common sense by the assertion, that the Bible miracles have stronger historical evidence than Cotton Mather's. Compare them.

Bible Miracles

id to have happened
 ateen hundred to six
 years ago.
 ant countries.
 the invention of print-

recorded in the Old
 Testaments, regarding
 is disputed *who* wrote
 s books; *when, where,*
 what language, they
 ten; where, how, and
 the original manu-
 ere preserved;* whe-
 rectly or incorrectly
 ed and translated.

recorded by men for
 eracity we have no
 but their own words,
 ose characters we are
 nted, who are quoted
 ntemporary historians
 orks have descended to

preserved through long
 of darkness in manu-
 chiefly in cloisters, or
 libraries, under the
 of men who avowed
 llingness to deceive,
 r deceit was necessary
 their ends, and who
 the people no access to
 y legends.†

Cotton Mather's Miracles

Are said to have happened
 about one hundred and forty
 years ago.

In our own country.

After the invention of print-
 ing.

Were recorded in his "Won-
 ders of the Invisible World,"
 regarding which there has been,
 there can be, no dispute. It
 was written in English, by Cot-
 ton Mather, printed at Boston,
 and has descended to our time.
 The original edition is still pre-
 served in our libraries.

Were recorded by a New
 England Doctor of Divinity,
 who obtained a diploma from
 the University at Glasgow, was
 elected fellow of the Royal
 Society of London, and was
 universally esteemed as a man
 of probity and learning.

Were open to all the world,
 and read by thousands at the
 time.

Were commented upon, and
 adverted to, by contemporary
 historians.

cannot even suppose the Pentateuch a manuscript. The mode of
 Moses' time, seems to have been on plastered stones. (Deut.
 ii. ver. 2.) A writer in Walsh's Review (vol. ii. p. 307) asserts
 materials for writing any long work did not exist previous to the
 egyptian papyrus, which was not used more than five hundred years
 ist. If so, how can we talk of a long history, *authentically recorded,*
 er period?

to the present day, the catholic church (which had for fifteen
 the care of these documents) shuts out the common people from
 l of the Scriptures.

reign of Henry V. a law was passed against the perusal of the
 in England. It was enacted "That whomsoever they were
 ld read the scriptures in the mother tongue, they should forfeit
 , lit, and godes, from they're heyres forever; and so be condemned
 kes to God, enemies to the crown, and most arrant traitors to the

*The Bible Miracles**Cotton Mather's Miracles*

<p>Were first collected together (those of the New Testament) more than three hundred years after they were written, and their infallibility determined by an ecclesiastical council.*</p>	<p>Were printed and published by the author.</p>
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It needs not that I further pursue, as I easily might parallel. The most superficial observer, after such a state the case, will hardly rest satisfied with your assertion, regards the Bible miracles, "there was no possibility of tion."

You seem half inclined to get out of the difficulty by the Cotton Mather's stories. But that would not material matters. You will have hundreds of similar marvels to besides, beginning with Prince Hohenlohe's; or, if they appear to you too modern, with some of the Athanasian Catholic miracles.

Do not imagine, I pray you, that the German prince's name however out of fashion at present, want for evidence, and of the strongest kind too. If you will take the trouble peruse a pamphlet issued in this city in 1823, and entitled "Miracles wrought by the intercession of Prince Hohenlohe" you will find the account of three separate and very distinct related narratives of (alleged) miraculous cures performed "through his most serene highness' prayers;" one on Miss Lalor, one on Miss Mary Stuart, both of Ireland, and Miss Barbary O'Connor, in England. These are duly attested by a host of regular depositions, *on oath*, before a magistrate, names, dates, places, every minute particular being mentioned and every imaginable reference given. In the latter case have (strange to say!) the deposition of the *protestant* at

* William Penn seems strongly to have felt the force of this argument. "I demand of our adversaries," says he, "if they are well assured that the men that first collected, embodied, and declared them [the Scriptures] authentic, by a public canon? which we read was in the Council of Loaden three hundred and sixty years after Christ, though not as they received; during which time they had been tossed and tumbled through many hands and many judgments and opinions. Some received, and some rejected, and doubtless many thousands of times translated, and it is not improbable they were also abused. If they miss in the argument here, they are gone till they come to us. I say, how do they think that these men rightly discerned true from spurious?"—*Penn's Selected Works*, vol. I., p. 303.

And, a little further on, "Now, sure it is, that some of the Books taken in by one council for *canonical* were rejected by another for *apocryphal* and that which was left out by the former for *apocryphal* was taken in by the latter for *canonical*. Now visible it is, that they contradicted each other and as true that they both erred respecting the present belief, for your Bibles and catalogues vary from *theirs*; and, let me say without offence, if you can produce a catalogue you can produce."—*Ibid.* pp. 303, 304.

physician, John Badely, M. D., who attests the miracle, but ascribes it either to the simple influence of prayer, or to the effect of the mind on the body; (pages 48 and 49 of the pamphlet.) It is truly marvellous to observe, what a mass of evidence can be adduced for that which we know must be a mere deception. These miracles happened, one of them in 1821, and two of them in 1823; the account is printed, published, and blazoned abroad by the catholics, as proof positive that theirs is the true church, seeing that it alone retains the power of working miracles; and the narrative passes current and uncontradicted! What an admirable opportunity for some Hohenlohian theologian, some thousand years hence, (if superstition be not, long ere then, annihilated,) very learnedly to argue, (in your words,) that these miracles "stand on ground peculiarly their own;" that "there was no possibility of deception;" that "they were recorded by eye-witnesses at the periods in which they occurred;" (this, by the way, is proved regarding Hohenlohe's miracles, but is *not*, by any means, proved regarding those of the Bible;) that "they were performed in the presence not only of friends, but of sharp-sighted enemies, who did not pretend to deny them,* but attributed them," not indeed, "to the devil," but "to the influence of the mind on the body." How immeasurably stronger is the evidence for the Irish than for the Jewish miracles! and if we admit the latter, what extravagant inconsistency were it to think of rejecting the former!

Take, as a specimen of Athanasian miracles, the following: In the fourth century, Tipasa, a maritime colony of Mauritania, braved the fury of the heretical sect of the *Donatists*, and thus incurred the anger of the cruel Hunneric. A military count was dispatched from Carthage to Tipasa. He collected the catholics in the forum, and, in the presence of the whole province, deprived the guilty of their right hands and tongues. But the holy confessors continued to speak without tongues. This miracle is attested by Victor, an African bishop, who published a history of the persecution, within two years after the event.† Victor's words are: "If any one should doubt of the truth, let him repair to Constantinople, and listen to the clear and perfect language of Restitutius, the sub-deacon, one of these glorious sufferers, who is now lodged in the palace of the emperor Zeno, and is respected by the devout empress." Here is an appeal made, at the very time, to facts which every inhabitant of Constantinople might examine for himself. But even this is not

* This, too, we cannot rationally assert regarding the Bible miracles; they may have been publicly denied again and again, and we, at this distance of time, know nothing of the denial. Several decrees of the emperors Constantine and Theodosius, are couched in these terms: "that all writings adverse to the claims of the Christian religion should be committed to the fire."—See the decrees, quoted in Taylor's *Synagoga*, p. 35.

† Victor Vitensis, v. vi., p. 76. See, also, Ruinart, pp. 467, 468.

all. At Constantinople we find an unexceptionable, dispassionate witness, Æneas of Gaza, a *Platonic philosopher*, who has thus described his observations on these African sufferers: "*I saw them myself; I heard them speak; I diligently inquired by what means such an articulate voice could be formed, without any organ of speech; I used my eyes to examine the report of my ears; I opened their mouth, and saw that the whole tongue had been completely torn away by the roots; an operation which the physicians generally suppose to be mortal.*"*

It is actually startling, to observe the degree of historical evidence which may be adduced, to attest a falsehood!

What proof that will, for one moment, compare with the proofs of this Athanasian miracle, can be adduced in support of a single miracle of the Christian Scriptures? None. The dullest must see, the most bigoted confess, this.

Will you have another specimen in proof that the miracles performed by that "holy catholic church" which you, not very politely I think, call "the very Babylon of the Apocalypse," are not mere clumsy and barefaced juggler-tricks, which none but the ignorant crowd believe? The Rev. Mr. Forsyth, a British traveller of taste, talent, and learning, gives us, in his book on Italy, an account of a *withered elm-tree* in the Piazza del Duomo, at Florence, being suddenly restored to vegetation by the body of St. Zenobio resting against its trunk. The reverend gentleman's words are: "This event happened when Florence was more populous than now, *and the most enlightened city of Europe*: it happened in the most public place of the whole town; *in the presence of many thousands* then attending the solemn removal of the saint from San Lorenzo to the cathedral. The event is recorded by contemporary historians, and is inscribed upon a marble column, now standing where the tree stood; a column erected in the face of those who saw the miracle performed, and who, certainly, if the tale were false, would not allow so impudent a story to insult them."---*Forsyth's Italy*, p. 341.

You see that the "very Babylon of the Apocalypse" has "surviving monuments" for her miracles. Quote to me one surviving monument of the Bible miracles half so unexceptionably authenticated. If you cannot, either give up that test of authenticity, or believe at once in St. Zenobio.

Thus, you see, it is not one or two marvels you have to get over. Once set up the principle, that plausible historical evidence suffices to substantiate miraculous agency, and you will have to swallow prescription after prescription of that "medicine" which Eusebius honestly tells us, he administers "for the benefit of those who require to be deceived."

* Æneas Gæzeus in Theophrasto, in Biblioth. Patrum; tom. viii. p. 664, 665.

The veracity of the Christian fathers, you say, has little to do with the authenticity of the New Testament. Little to do? Why, sir, it has *every thing* to do with it. *Every particle of the direct historical evidence for the authenticity of the books of the New Testament hangs upon it.* How, in common sense's name, would you prove the Testament historically, except from the ecclesiastical history of the first century, when its books, if genuine, were written? And who are the authorities whence our ecclesiastical historians derive what they discover, or think they discover, of that early history of Christianity? You need not surely be told that these authorities are *the ancient fathers of the Christian church*. If you have studied Lardner and Jones and Tillemont and Mosheim, and the rest of our celebrated church historians, you know, for instance, that they hold Eusebius to be the very sheet anchor of reliance for all they adduce of the history of the three first centuries. Tillemont* says of him: "Without Eusebius, we should scarce have any knowledge of the history of the first ages of Christianity, or of the authors who wrote at that time. All the Greek authors of the fourth century who undertook to write the history of the church, have begun where Eusebius ended, as having nothing considerable to add to his labours."† But Tillemont does not think it necessary to inform his readers that this same Eusebius, "*without whom we should scarcely have had any knowledge of the first ages of Christianity or of the authors who wrote at that time,*" used "*falsehood as a medicine and for the benefit of those who required to be deceived.*" If he had, he might have induced very rebellious doubts in their minds, how much of that history which vouches for the Testament's authenticity was medicinal and how much veracious.

Untenable, therefore, as your position was, you must yet "endorse for the veracity and sanity of the Christian fathers;" or you will see the very materials of all ancient Christian history (and consequently the external evidence for the New Testament) crumble to pieces before your eyes.

The early fathers "had not the power," you assert, "of making alterations in the Scriptures." Why, sir, there is not a single fact in ecclesiastical history more notorious, than that they not only had this power, but freely exercised it too. Bishop Marsh, in his *Michaelis*, than which, I cannot cite to you higher authority,

* Tillemont was born in Paris in 1637. His *Ecclesiastical History* is in sixteen volumes quarto.

† Quoted in Taylor's *Diægesis*, p. 359.

‡ The learned Bishop of Llandaff may satisfy us of this: "The Introduction to the New Testament," says he, "by Michaelis, late professor at Gottingen, as translated by Marsh, is the *standard work*, comprehending what is important on the subject."—Quoted in *Ellisley's Annotations on the Gospels*, vol. II., (the introduction,) p. xxvi.

says; "It is a certain fact, that several readings in our common printed text are nothing more than alterations made by Origen, whose authority was so great in the Christian church, that emendations which he proposed, though, as he himself acknowledged, supported by the evidence of no manuscript, were very generally received."*

The quotations given by early polemics are, you seem to think, evidence that the books of the New Testament, as being in the hands of all, could not be altered. The very quotations happen to furnish evidence, that the books then received as holy, and those now constituting the Testaments, are not the same. "It is to be lamented," says Michaelis, in the work I have just quoted, "that various readings which, as appears from the quotations of the fathers, were in the text of the Greek Testament, are to be found in none of the manuscripts which are at present remaining."†

As to our detecting the forgeries of Origen or Eusebius, or any of their contemporaries, by referring to ancient manuscripts, that, you are doubtless aware, is an impossibility. They lived and wrote, Origen in the *third*, and Eusebius in the *fourth*, century. But *all* manuscripts of the New Testament of earlier date than the *sixth* century are lost.‡ We must trust, then, in this matter, entirely to the honour of those who tell us plainly that they think it virtuous to deceive, in order to advance (what they declare to be,) the cause of truth.

It cannot be considered very marvellous, that the laborious Lardner should have confessed, that, "the history of the New Testament is attended with many difficulties,"§ but what is marvellous---what may fairly rank next to a modern miracle---is, that any man of common sense should ever dream of getting over them.

I have occupied so much space in speaking of the great leading facts and general principles, (as conceiving these the more important and pertinent to this discussion,) that little remains to me to speak of men. Our readers will judge in Washington's case between the authority of Jefferson and Gouverneur Morris on the one hand, and Hosack on the other; that is, if these authorities are supposed to contradict each other; which, to me, they by no means appear to do. Both may be correct. Washington may have been an episcopalian in the days of the early revolutionary war, and a deist in 1799. A sincere deist I believe him to have been; and as such the anecdote of Potts is easily explained. As

* *Michaelis Introd. to New Test.*, by Bishop Marsh, vol. ii., p. 368.

† *Michaelis' Introd.*, vol. ii., p. 160.

‡ "No manuscript of the New Testament now extant is prior to the sixth century."—*Michaelis' Introd.*, vol. ii., p. 161.

The *Codex Bezae*, deposited in the University library at Cambridge, is said to be the oldest. It was found at Lyons in 1562. See *Bishop Marsh*, vol. ii., p. 229.

§ *Lardner's Credibility*, vol. i., p. 136.

to the extract from the Farewell Address, a Hicksite quaker (and such an one you have declared to be the next thing to an atheist,) would say as much. They, too, hold the sense of religious obligation to be indispensable. How they explain the term religion is another matter; and who can venture to tell us how Washington explained it? It is well known that the patriot hero, on his death-bed, sought none of the consolations of religion;* and it has been confidently stated to me (but as I have not positive authority† at hand to substantiate this, I state it hypothetically,) that he actually refused spiritual aid, when it was proposed to send for a clergyman.

Any thing like indignation at my simple statement of opinion on this matter, is much out of place.

But not only shall Washington have been an episcopalian, but John Adams a congregationalist---John Adams! who wrote to Jefferson, "This would be the best of all possible worlds, if there were no religion in it."‡ It only remains to make Jefferson a presbyterian, and Franklin a methodist, and then the list will be complete.

Does it not strike you as somewhat remarkable, that amongst this so very religious nation of 1776, "where infidelity was so rare that one might live to a great age without meeting it," three fourths of the very men who took the lead in political emancipation were, what you call infidels? and not one of them distinguished for zealous piety?

But enough of men. The best and wisest are fallible, and may err in opinion like their neighbours, and no conclusive argument can be drawn, on either side, from such a source.

Let the opinions quoted by you from Addison, Byron, and Rousseau, go for what they are worth.

Your assertion, that "the sublimity of the Bible style proves it to be superhuman," reminds me of the following: "The Koranists, or persons attached to the Koran, find nothing eloquent or excellent out of the book. They assert that Lebid, one of the most famous poets of the Arabs, became a convert upon reading

* See, in proof of this, a record of his death-scene, being notes taken down the very day after his death, by Tobias Lear, an eye-witness, and furnished by George Washington Basset, of Fredericksburg, the other day, to the "Courier and Enquirer" of this city. His dying words were: "Doctor, I die hard, but I am not afraid to go. I believed from my first attack I should not survive it." This, according to Lear's testimony, was the tone of the whole of his remarks; not one word of religion is mixed with them.

† Permit me to ask your authority for the story of Ethan Allen.

‡ Given in Jefferson's Memoirs, being a quotation by Jefferson, in writing to John Adams, of John Adams' words in the letter to which Jefferson was replying. See *Jefferson's Memoirs*, vol. iv., p. 301.

I may add, that the context would induce the conclusion, that John Adams meant to be understood as speaking of doctrinal religion, distinct from morality. Various other quotations to the same purpose, from the same source, will occur to those who have perused the inestimable work from which I quote. To adduce them is superfluous.

three or four verses of the second chapter, which he believed inimitable in their style."*

I need not advert to my opponent's caricatures of my opinions;† being willing to trust the sagacity of our readers in detecting these, and their candour in judging me *by my own words*. With them, too, I leave the decision, whether you or I have substantiated our positions regarding the French Revolution; whether your proofs of the necessity of a revelation be "naked assumptions" or not; and whether my argument contained in the editorial article on the "Morals of a Christian City"‡ be fair or unfair, sustained or unsustained.

Of the evidences of prophecy I shall speak in my next letter.

It is childish to urge that *my* opinions regarding suicide have the remotest bearing on the subject before us, any more than *my* opinions on the metempsychosis or any other ancient doctrine. Were it not that I know *why* my opinion is asked, I should not even have alluded to the subject again. You learnt my sentiments on suicide, from personal conversation with me; you believe them to be unpopular, and desire to have the benefit of their unpopularity. I will not disappoint you; the rather, because I care little who knows my opinions, on *any* subject. I conceive, then, that when a man is situated, so that no one is dependent on him for support, for counsel, or for affection, so that he has his own interests only to consult in making a selection between life and death, he is of right entitled to that selection. He is, in that case, the judge whether existence be a blessing or a curse to him; and if, unfortunately, he should feel and know it to be the latter, I perceive neither justice nor expediency in condemning him, against a deliberately formed determination, to retain it.

I ask pardon of our readers for having been betrayed by (what I fear must be called a selfish) desire to avoid even the appearance of dissimulation, into the expression of an opinion thus irrelevant, supererogatory, and uncalled-for by the subject under discussion.

One only point in my opponent's letter remains to be noticed. He speaks, as it is fashionable enough to do, of the "coldness and heartlessness of scepticism."

Religion has been called the poetry of reason; and we are told that its dreams are so fair and beautiful, that, even if baseless, none but a rough hand or a careless heart would disturb them. As poetry is often tolerated for its beauties, even when a rigid analysis discovers folly in its sentiments, so, it has sometimes been argued, may the pleasing imaginings of religion be received and approved, even though they may be imaginings only.

* D'Herbelot, *mot* ALCORAN, p. 81.

† That "because one thing is false, another is;" that I estimate the truth of records *merely* by their age, &c., &c.

‡ See *Free Enquirer*, vol. iii., p. 312.

But if I adopted this opinion, I would not choose the Christian religion, with its grave and unadorned ceremonial, and its abstract doctrines, and its long homilies. If we look to religion as the poetry of life, let us have the glowing mythology of Greece at once. Let us again people the mountains with Oreads, and the grove with Dryads. At every fountain let a young and beautiful Naiad lean over her magic urn. Let us clothe the Gods with human frailties and passions, that we may feel for and with them. Let them be moved to pity and warmed to love. Let us re-establish the court on Mount Ida, in all its classic magnificence. Let the venerable father of the Gods assume his throne by the side of his stately queen. Let the majestic Apollo be there; and Venus, in her heavenly beauty; and Pallas, in her peerless wisdom. Instal Iris again as the aerial messenger; and let the graceful Ganymede approach, and tender the nectar goblet. Banish all our cold, dull sermons, and overthrow our great brick churches, and let us again have the temple of marble, with its gorgeous rites and splendid paintings, and its

Statues but known from shapes of the earth,
By being too lovely for mortal birth.

Give us incense-breathing altars, in groves sacred to the graces and muses. Give us the song, and the dance, and the quaint festival. Tell us not of a ball of fire revolving on its axis, nor of a satellite shining with reflected light: but let the God of day once more yoke his golden steeds, and the gentle Diana descend to her sleeping Endymion.

That was a religion of poetry and of beauty, and of rich imaginations; and if it be these we seek, let us have it once more. Tell us not that scepticism is cold and heartless, because it dissipates a few day-dreams about the prophet of Nazareth and his virgin-mother. How bright and glorious, compared with these, were the dreams that Christianity dispersed!

Let me not be understood that I regret the dreams, bright and glorious as they were: they were dreams of ignorance, whose fascinating influence cheats the reason, and leads the mind off from the important realities of life. I do but say, that if we *must* have poetical fancies, those of the Grecian mythology are infinitely more beautiful than any in the Christian revelation.

But why should his creed be deemed cold and heartless, who looks not beyond this earth for his hopes and sympathies? Is there not enough here below to fill the heart and warm the feelings? Are the prospects of this world so very barren of interest, the charms of nature so very powerless, the ties of affection so very poor and weak, that heaven must fill the void? When about to perform an act of benevolence or justice, shall it fail to bring us pleasure, unless we bear in mind that we are but strangers and pilgrims here, and that all is vanity and vexation of spirit? When some lovely prospect is spread before me, rich in summer beauty,

must I pause and look up to a God of nature, ere I can feel its mild and cheering influence? Or if, in the paths of life, I meet some noble and generous spirit, must I think of the creator, before I can admire and love the creature of his hand?

There may be those in whom habit has created such supernatural wants; and who, to enjoy this world, must first imagine another. I can but say for myself, that this is not my case. I have found, in sublunary scenes and among sublunary beings, enough—and more than enough—to occupy my feelings, and to interest my heart.

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

LETTER IX.

New York, October 1, 1831.

SIR,

It should be constantly kept in view, that the question under discussion is the *authenticity of the Bible*, and not *how strong are its proofs*. That it is “a human record of a divine revelation, and a man-translated transcript of the word of God,” does not, therefore, in the least affect the question. As to the hypercriticism on the term revelation, it is utterly gratuitous. When we say the Bible is a revelation, or the word of God, we do not mean that God wrote it, but only, that what is therein attributed to God as his words, is so; just as words which we might utter would be ours, even if recorded by another.

One would suppose it time for sceptics to cease objecting to the miracles of the Bible, if it is so difficult, as my opponent contends, to decide what a miracle is. They will not pretend that they are acquainted with the whole arcana of nature. How then do they know, that what is recorded in the Bible is not in conformity to nature? Why then do they object to it? They will perhaps retort by asking us how we, who are likewise ignorant of some of the secrets of nature, know those events were miracles, even on the supposition that they transpired. In answer, we would say, let it be admitted, that the scripture events just mentioned occurred, and we have not the least concern but that mankind will regard them as miracles. But how extremely inconsistent is my opponent; at one time, objecting to the Bible because it contains accounts of miracles; at another, arguing that they were perhaps no miracles. But perceiving that neither of these positions is tenable, he, prudent man, changes his position,

and argues that we have no means of distinguishing a divine miracle from an infernal one, and therefore, that we know not if the Bible is from the devil, even if its miracles are real. This is his last resort, and it will therefore be worth the while to dwell a little on this point.

First, then, if miracles of any kind be admitted, the existence of beings superior to man must likewise be admitted; and this at once demolishes atheism and nothingarianism, and removes the objection to the admission of a God. In the next place, it is not to be supposed, that if God were to make a revelation, either internally by his spirit, or externally by a miracle, he would be unable *so* to reveal himself as to enable his creatures to realize, that the revelation by him made was divine, and not infernal; and being able thus to reveal himself, it is to be presumed he *would* do it, so far at least as to prevent *sincere seekers after truth* from being deceived, however he might permit *captious cavillers* to be led astray by the delusions of the devil. And thirdly, it is unreasonable to believe, that whatever the power of the devil might be in this respect, he would be permitted to take the helm of the universe, and thereby mount the eternal throne. Now the miracles recorded in the Bible are of a kind requiring in their performance the command of all nature. None but the creator could divide the sea, and stop the sun, and hush the tempest, and perform many other wondrous deeds narrated in the Bible. *Such* events we should be in no danger of suspecting for "juggler tricks," were they to happen even in our own enlightened day; nay, although it were a day of "witchcraft and second-sight;" or their performer of imposture in accomplishing the same? Incredulous as sceptics now are, they would, in such an event, be compelled to admit, as did their kindred spirits of yore, that real miracles had been performed; though, like those ancient infidels, they might be led, by their hostility to the heavenly messenger, absurdly and malignantly to attribute his godlike deeds to Beelzebub, instead of "yielding to him their hearts, and bending their knees," as they should do. Nay, has not my opponent said already, that he should suspect his own eye-sight of hallucination, if he thought he saw a miracle? He needs not therefore urge the *antiquity* of the *Bible* miracles as an objection to *them*, the more especially as mere antiquity is not an objection to his belief in other things. The fact is, he is evidently determined not to believe, be the evidence what it may; and he needs not, therefore, complain of the *kind* of evidence by which the Bible is sustained. Nor must he expect in this way to arrive at truth. A man that rejects *all* evidence, even that of his own senses, has no means left upon which to decide upon questions at all, and places himself beyond the reach of conviction and hope. Such a man, however, would do well to relinquish all claim to the

name of a free inquirer. But suppose we could not be *certain* of *any thing*, (which is the unavoidable result of his rule touching the fallibility of the senses,) still, we should at all events, even under such circumstances, *believe some things, and disbelieve others*. What then, though our senses *might* deceive us, or, if not our senses, yet some "being of light and beauty on a summer cloud?" What though it were *possible* that we *might* be unable to decide with *certainty* between a heavenly and an infernal messenger? I would ask if the risk is all on one side? *Might* it not be the case, that the supernatural messenger would be divine, and that we might be liable to punishment in disregarding his message? But what becomes of my opponent's other argument, viz., that if a God exist, he is able to make us know him? What is this but saying, that we *can* distinguish between divine and infernal revelations? As to the deception of Adam and Eve, I shall not admit that they were *necessarily* ensnared by the serpent, *knowing*, as they did, that God had prohibited what the serpent enticed them to do.

The idea that an *almighty* being cannot reveal himself to his creatures in such a manner as to enable them to know, that what he reveals is from himself, is so repugnant to reason, and so self-contradictory withal, that but very few, even of sceptics, will adopt it. One *man* can convince another of *his* identity---can demonstrate that he is an individual of whom the other may have heard---and yet, cannot an *infinite* being, possessing all possible resources, enable us to distinguish him from the devil? Who can seriously believe so barefaced an absurdity?

That the Bible miracles, &c., are disputed, is no argument against them whatever; for what will not *some* men dispute? The occurrence of motion and the existence of matter have both been disputed. And, as we have seen, my opponent is ready at any moment to dispute his *own* senses, rather than believe in a miracle.

I have nowhere asserted, that the Bible miracles have stronger *historical* evidence than Cotton Mather's. I have merely said, that neither the Salem witchcraft, nor any other marvel of any age, stands on the same ground in *point of evidence*, as do those miracles; and that not a single instance can be produced containing all *the kinds* of evidence which they do. This I am prepared to show; which I will now do, so far as relates to all the cases adduced in my opponent's last letter.

In the first place, the miracles of the Bible were such as none but the God of nature could perform, and in the cases of which there could have been no deception, and no possibility of their being occasioned by a natural cause. Take, for example, the cases which I have several times already brought into view, viz., the Deluge, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the dividing

of the Red Sea and Jordan, the stopping and retrogression of the sun, and the raising of the dead. Not a miracle in the list presented by my opponent, is of a description similar to one of these. Secondly, they are attested by universal history and tradition, and are confirmed by the physical appearances of the earth, and by monumental and institutory memorials the world over. Thus, were there not a Bible in existence, its leading facts could be perused in the annals of the human race. Not so with any of the marvels noted by my opponent. Thirdly, they were performed openly before the community, friends and foes; and on the strength of their own intrinsic evidence, they compelled the assent of all parties to their supernatural character, being of such a nature as to leave no opportunity to assign them either to deception or natural causes. None of my opponent's cases are thus conditioned. A heated imagination is generally supposed to have had much to do in the case of the Salem witchcraft; but no one will pretend, that it could have had any thing to do with the miracles of the Bible to which I have referred. *That* witchcraft was not *similar* to the Bible miracles, but was of a nature which left room for deception in many of the cases, to say the least. But that Cotton Mather *wrote* the *account* thereof, no one pretends to deny. My opponent's parallel, therefore, between the Bible miracles and Salem witchcraft, is just so much labour lost, notwithstanding all its display on paper; and it might just as well have been run between ancient history of any kind and that same witchcraft, so far as relates to antiquity, distance, transcription, translation, &c. &c., as between the Bible and that witchcraft. But I deny that we have no vouchers for the veracity of the writers of the Scriptures but their own word, or that their writings have ever been exclusively in the hands of the catholic church.---The miracles of Hohenlohe were cases in which there was a *chance* for deception, by connivance on the part of the subjects of those miracles, in feigning sickness; or they might be assigned, as the protestant physician did assign them, to natural causes. Besides, here was but *one protestant* evidence in this case; and, of course, there was a chance for falsehood or bribery under these circumstances which would not exist in case of the witnessing of a miracle by a promiscuous multitude of all descriptions of persons, as was the case with the Bible miracles.

The story of the resuscitated tree at Florence needs more evidence than the declaration of one man who lived we know not how long after the event is said to have happened. Let us have the *date* of that event, the names and characters of the historians who record it, and the religious character of the inhabitants of Florence at that period. Let us know whether there were any *protestant* witnesses of the same; for catholics can, as they suppose, get pardoned of a falsehood for a very small *sum of money*, and get canonized for deception in the service of their church. To make this miracle parallel with the miracles of the Bible, it is necessary to show that the spectators were enemies, who would not admit its occurrence

if they could, by the most rigid scrutiny, possibly detect any imposition; and likewise, that some of those who *recorded* it were enemies. Then, the historians themselves must be credible and well known; and it must be shown, that they lived at the time pretended, and were the real authors of the accounts of this event. In addition to all this, it must be made to appear, that the miracle itself has been continually assailed by subtle opposers ever since its occurrence, without their being able to explode it; and that it has been so notorious to all the world, that there has been every imaginable opportunity, from that day to this, for those who do not believe in it to investigate the subject. And now let me ask who *are* the historians that have recorded this miracle? I find it not in the list of pretended miracles on which catholics the most rely.

The case of the *tongueless talkers* comes now to be considered. It is necessary, in the first place, to prove by satisfactory evidence, that Victor was the author of this account, and that it was not a forgery of the dark ages. Next, it is necessary to show, that the whole community, friends and foes, had access to the palace of Zeno, and admitted the reality of the marvel; for there was a far greater opportunity to bribe *one* Platonic philosopher, than there would have been to bribe *the public*. Besides, it must further be proved, that the confession attributed to this philosopher was not a forgery, foisted into the account during the same dark period to which I just now alluded. Lastly, it must be shown, that this account has been a matter of notoriety, and open for the investigation of all, from that time to the present. Prove *all* these things, and I will then admit its reality, but not that the Bible miracles are untrue.

Thus have we seen, that not one of the cases yet adduced stands on the same ground with scripture miracles. But while I have little faith in the "lying wonders" of popery, I am very far from running to the other extreme, and saying, that because there are some false miracles, there have never been any other. For the very reason that there are such miracles, we have grounds for supposing there have been true ones; just as when we see counterfeit money, we have reason to suppose there are true bills. Nor do I believe, that God has left himself without witness in this respect, even in this very age of the world. In my next, I intend to present a mass of irresistible evidence to show, that he does, in these latter days, actually manifest himself in a supernatural manner to some individuals; so that this objection of the sceptic, viz., that there is nothing supernatural in modern days, shall no longer be urged against ancient miracles. Could nothing of the kind, however, be shown, this would be no serious objection to those miracles, seeing infinite wisdom knows best when to cause miracles, and when to forbear to cause them.

The pertinacity of my opponent, in continuing to persist in his futile attempt to prove Washington an infidel, directly in the face of his whole public and private character, is truly astonishing. It is not that the cause of Christianity will stand or fall by the aid or

opposition of a great name, but it is to shield the reputation of that illustrious personage from the stigma of being a hypocritical infidel, that induces me to present what follows.

Bancroft, in his *Life of Washington*, says: "He was as eminent for piety as for patriotism. In principle and practice he was a Christian. The support of an episcopal church, in the vicinity of Mount Vernon, rested principally upon him; and here, when on his estate, he with constancy attended public worship. In his address to the American people at the close of the war, mentioning the favourable period of the world at which the independence of his country was established, and enumerating the causes which unitedly had ameliorated the condition of human society, he, above science, philosophy, commerce, and all other considerations, ranked '*the pure and benign light of revelation.*' Supplicating heaven that his fellow citizens might cultivate the disposition and practise the virtue which exalt a community, he presented the following petition to his God: 'That he would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind, which were the characteristics of the *divine author of our blessed religion*; without an humble imitation of whose example in these things, we can never hope to be a happy nation.' During the war, he not unfrequently rode ten or twelve miles from camp to attend public worship; and he never omitted this attendance when opportunity presented. In the establishment of his presidential household, he reserved to himself the Sabbath, free from the interruptions of private visits or public business; and throughout the *eight years of his civil administration*, he gave to the *institutions of Christianity the influence of his example.*" Ramsay, another of his biographers, says: "He was the friend of morality and religion; steadily attended on public worship; and encouraged and strengthened the hands of the clergy. In all his public acts, he made the most respectful mention of Providence, and, in a word, carried the spirit of piety with him, both in his private life and public administration. The equanimity which attended him through life, did not forsake him in death. He was the same in that moment as in all the past; magnanimous and firm; confiding in the mercy and resigned to the will of heaven. He submitted to the inevitable stroke with the dignity of a man, the calmness of a philosopher, the resignation and confidence of a Christian. His body, attended by military honours and the offices of religion, was deposited in the family vault." Weems, another of his biographers, says: "I have often been informed by Col. B. Temple, of King William's county, Virginia, who was one of his aids in the French and Indian war, that he has frequently known Washington, on the Sabbath, read the Scriptures and pray with his regiment, in the absence of the chaplain; and also, that on sudden and unexpected visits into his marquee, he has, more than once, found him on his knees, at his devotions. The Rev. Mr. Lee Massey,

long a rector of Washington's parish, and from early life his intimate, has frequently assured me that 'he never knew so constant an attendant on church as Washington. And his behaviour in the house of God,' added my reverend friend, 'was so deeply reverential, that it produced the happiest effect on my congregation, and greatly assisted me in my moralising labours. No company ever withheld him from church. I have often been at Mount Vernon on the Sabbath morning, when his breakfast table was filled with guests. But to him they furnished no pretext for neglecting his God, and losing the satisfaction of setting a good example. For, instead of staying at home, out of false complaisance to them, he used constantly to invite them to accompany him.' His secretary, Judge Harrison, has frequently been heard to say, that 'whenever the general could be spared from camp on the Sabbath, he never failed riding out to some neighbouring church, to join those who were publicly worshipping the great Creator.' And while he resided in Philadelphia, as President of the United States, his constant and cheerful attendance on divine service was such as to convince every reflecting mind, that he deemed no levee so honourable as that of his Almighty Maker; no pleasures equal to those of devotion; and no business a sufficient excuse for neglecting his Supreme Benefactor. In his last illness, he behaved with the firmness of a soldier, and the resignation of a Christian. He was once or twice heard to say, that, had it pleased God, he should have been glad to die a little easier, but that he doubted not that it was for his good. Silent and sad, his physicians" (Dra. Craig, Dick, and Brown) "sat by his bed side, looking on him as he lay panting for breath. They thought on the past, and the tear swelled in their eyes. He marked it, and stretching out his hand to them, and shaking his head, said, 'O, no! don't! don't!' then, with a delightful smile, added, 'I am dying, gentlemen. but, thank God! I am not afraid to die.' Feeling that the hour of his departure out of this world was at hand, he desired that every body would quit the room. They all went out, and according to his wish, left him---with his God."

Such was the man whom sceptics who have not even read his life, (as my opponent informs me he has not,) have the effrontery to claim as an infidel---a man who recognized the Scriptures as *revelation*, and their author as *divine*; who was a member of a Christian church, and constant in his attendance on public worship; who was habituated to the reading of the Scriptures as a religious duty, and to acts of private devotion; and who, to his dying moment, remained steadfast in his religious views. And these circumstances by the way, show pretty clearly in what sense he used the term religion. And on what grounds do they presume thus to traduce the illustrious dead? to brand him virtually with the character of HYPOCRITE and INFIDEL, when all America, all the world, know better? Why, a mere conjecture of one who pretended to be in his secrets, and who was therefore a

f he has told the truth, by having exposed this secret. I *ere conjecture*; for it seems, Gouverneur Morris did not : Washington *told* him he did not believe in Christianity. s not uncommon for many, when they express an *opinion* n's sentiments or character, to express themselves in this ay, meaning to be understood merely as expressing their

Besides, it is worthy of remark, that this is mentioned ington's *secret* view of the subject, thus directly charging h being *secretly* what he was not *openly*, and even *different* at he *professed* to be, thereby making him a base hypo- well as an infidel. Again, it is not a little marvellous, erson himself should not have stated this on his own au- instead of giving that of Gouverneur Morris. Had not he opportunity, by personal acquaintance with Washington, to his infidelity, if indeed there was any thing of the kind?

Washington so consummate a hypocrite as to elude a, even by his penetrating eye? But is it not very that Jefferson may have made a *mistake* in this item of nal, as he did in several other instances. At all events, I will sooner believe that it is even a *forgery*, if they tribute it to a better source, than to believe Washington been an unbeliever in the Bible, in direct contradiction ostensible character. Suppose, however, *contrary* to , that Washington did, towards the close of his life, sceptical, this has nothing to do with the question in rela- which the characters of Washington, Franklin, and others roduced. That question was, What was the character of who *achieved the liberties of our country*? And it will moment be pretended, that, at *the time of the revolution*, gton was not a believer in the Christian religion.

John Adams, suppose it were true, that in his dotage he ewhat sceptical, it would not hence follow, that he was so ne of the revolution. As I said in my last, I am quite t he was a member of a congregational church. And Adams, his brother, certainly was. With regard to , he wrote his own memoirs at an *advanced age*; in , states, that, when a *young man*, he was sceptical; that, ding scepticism, he adopted the Socratic mode of dis- by asking his opponent questions, as the easiest and the ethod; and that, in this way, he sometimes obtained which neither his *cause* nor his *arguments* merited. The g is his epitaph, written by himself a long time before his

THE BODY
of
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN,
Printer,
(like the cover of an old book,
its contents worn out,
and stript of its lettering and gilding,)
lies here food for worms.
Yet the work itself shall not be lost;
For it will (as he believed) appear once more
in a new
and more beautiful edition,
corrected and amended
by
The Author.

How egregiously do men miss it, when they undertake to make assertions in relation to things concerning which they have not informed themselves. How supremely ridiculous for strangers who have not even read the lives of our distinguished men, to undertake to teach native Americans concerning their character, who are conversant with their biographies as *school-books*, from their very childhood! Shame on *the few* Americans who will suffer themselves to be fooled in such a manner.—As to my authority relative to Ethan Allen, here it comes. It is contained in the New-York Observer of July 17, 1830. It is as follows. "Dr. Elliott was well acquainted with Col. Allen, a celebrated infidel in Vermont, and made him a visit at the time his daughter was sick, and near death. He was introduced to the library, where the colonel read to him some of his writings with much self-complacency, and asked, 'Is not that well done?' While they were thus employed, a messenger entered, and informed Col. Allen that his daughter was dying, and desired to speak with him. He immediately went to her chamber, accompanied by Dr. Elliott, who was desirous of witnessing the interview. The wife of Col. Allen was a pious woman, and had instructed her daughter in the principles of Christianity. As soon as her father appeared at the bedside, she said to him, 'I am about to die; shall I believe in the principles you have taught me, or shall I believe in what my mother has taught me?' He became extremely agitated, his chin quivered, his whole frame shook, and, after waiting a few moments, he replied, 'Believe what your mother has taught you!' So much for the sincerity of Ethan Allen's pretensions to infidelity. With regard to the statement relative to the small amount of infidelity in this country in our revolutionary days, my opponent will recollect that *Franklin* was its author, whom he has *tried* to claim as an infidel, and who undoubtedly knew quite as much about the religious character of this country at that time, as did Mr. Owen, who was not then *born*. And as to

the statement of the latter individual, that three fourths of our leading political emancipators were sceptics, 'tis altogether a random assertion, which he has no authority whatever for making, and which can absolutely be disproved.

Thus, then, has he utterly failed in his attempt to prove our revolutionary patriots infidels, and in making out our revolution as one instance in which infidels have led the van of reform. Our country was at that period peculiarly free from infidelity, as has been seen by Franklin's statement. It was an eminently moral and religious country, as the institutions and customs of that period all go to prove. And this will account for the good order and auspicious result of our revolutionary struggle. Our citizens were not profligate infidel Parisians. Our rulers were not sanguinary infidel Robespierres. *Had* they been so, it is easy to see, that we should have shared the direful fate of ill-starred Gallia, and crouched beneath the yoke of a Napoleon, as a relief from the less tolerable one of infidelity. But, to return to the subject of the authenticity of the Bible.

Does not my opponent know, that a *library* was established at Athens, *more* than five hundred years before Christ, and that the Jews used to write on *parchment*? Why then talk of Egyptian *papyrus*? As to the written *moniment* on plastered stones, mentioned Deuteronomy, chap. xvii., ver. 2, 3, it is about as strong proof that that was the *only* mode of *writing* among the Jews at that time, as *our* monuments are that *we* have no other mode.

The idea that the fathers of the church could make alterations in the Bible without being detected, because Origen made some alterations, refutes itself. How is it known that he made alterations, unless those alterations were detected? He did indeed make some innovations in the doctrines of the church; but those innovations were condemned.

The concessions of opponents are always considered as so much pure gold; and therefore the quotations in my last from Rousseau and Byron, relative to the excellence and importance of the Christian religion, are "worth" considerable to our side of the question.

The sublimity of the style of many parts of the Bible, is acknowledged by the best of critics, both Christian and infidel, to be superior to any other writing whatever. But this was but *one* of the internal evidences by me adduced in my last. Why are not the others noticed?

I appeal to what I have written, as evidence that I have not caricatured the opinions of my opponent. The reader can examine at his leisure.

The subject of suicide has a most important bearing on the question under discussion. It seems that the greatest heathen philosophers justified it; and this, among other things, I produced as evidence of their moral darkness, and their necessity of the light of *revelation*. It was therefore incumbent on my

opponent, who had denied its necessity, either to retract in view the existence of such an evil among those heathen sages, or to defend the evil itself. He seemed desirous to evade the subject, by passing it over in silence, still insisting that revelation was unnecessary. What less could I do, under such circumstances, than to draw him out? He had indeed told me in common conversation, before three or four other individuals, that he did not disapprove of suicide under certain circumstances; and this made me still more desirous to draw from him a public avowal to that effect; not for the sake of exposing him to *prejudice*, but for the sake of exhibiting infidelity to the public as it *now is*, in all its horrid features, thereby enabling them to be duly on their guard. Thank heaven! I have succeeded; and now the community are given to understand, that the infidel leader of the day does not disapprove of self-murder, in itself considered, but only as *circumstances* may happen to render it inexpedient—just what might be expected from one who believes in no future retribution. This doctrine annihilates moral obligation at once, and all sense of moral evil. And though he has accompanied his admission with many modifications, it involves a sentiment truly diabolical, and one which takes a wider range than at first sight meets the eye. Every man knows his own sorrows better than another; and if the taking of one's own life, at any rate, were to be considered allowable, he would be his own judge, whether his sufferings were sufficient to justify him in the commission of the fatal deed. He might very easily argue himself into the belief, that it would be a greater evil to him to live, than it would be to others a benefit. Seeing that many widows and orphans get along very well in the world, he would naturally conclude, that his own might do the same. And should he deem his life too burthensome to be endured, and suicide no intrinsic crime, quickly indeed would the ties of conjugality and consanguinity be sundered, and the purple stream be made to flow. And, indeed, if at death it will be all the same with the pirate, the murderer, the self-murderer, and the virtuous man; if vice and crime are of so little consequence; it makes but little difference what men do. And especially, if the taking of life, in itself considered, is not wrong, the heathen *do well* in destroying their deformed and sickly infants and decrepid old people, and thus ridding society of its burthensome members. And now, sir, do not evade this question, but have the moral courage to answer it, for it has a concern with our discussion: Do the heathen do well or ill in thus relieving themselves of their burthen? If utility is the test, most assuredly such a state of things would be right. If murder, in itself considered, is not wrong, the good in such cases would vastly overbalance the evil. This is not irrelevant to our discussion. I have heretofore brought up these heathen customs as evidence of the necessity of revelation. My opponent must therefore defend them, or admit the necessity

of that which alone and invariably abolishes the same. One word before I quit this point, and that is, that it must be obvious to all, that the foregoing sentiment relative to the taking of life, must tend greatly to promote murder as well as suicide, making, as it does, the killing of a man and a beast intrinsically the same. And, to be sure, why not intrinsically the same, if man has no soul?

The heaven which my opponent would choose, is precisely what might be expected from the depraved heart of man, viz., a sensual one. And his Gods, too, he would have correspond with his heaven—Gods possessed of “human frailties and human passions”—

“Gods partial, vengeful, passionate, unjust,
Whose attributes are rage, revenge, and lust;
Such as the souls of cowards might conceive,
And, formed like tyrants, tyrants might believe.”

Yes, he would really prefer the darkness of old heathenism, to the glorious light of Christianity—the paltry, grovelling, wallowing sensuality of a mythological Elysium, to the purity and holiness of heaven—the infamous Gods of the heathen, to the adorable and infinite creator. Who could believe, that an individual could be found in all Christendom that would advance a sentiment like this? And how evident it is, that a man possessed of such feelings with regard to the spiritual world, must be eternally excluded from the kingdom of God from incapacity to participate in its sacred enjoyments, if for no other reason.

We see nothing as yet of the passage of Scripture which says, that Moses wrote an account of his own death, nor of that which says the Bible was lost and found. Neither have we yet been shown what branch of modern knowledge proves witchcraft to be impossible. Indeed, my opponent seems in a fair way to prove, not only that it is not impossible, but that it once actually existed at Salem. All that he has done thus far relative to the subject, goes to *prove*, not to *disprove*, witchcraft. And the same may be observed in relation to popish miracles.

Instead of directly clearing away the mass of rubbish contained in my opponent's last letter relative to the interpolations, misrepresentations, and historical evidences of the Bible, I shall present *direct evidence* of the genuineness, authenticity, and uncorrupted preservation of that book; in doing which, I shall make a few brief extracts from several writers on those subjects, as contained in Watson's Theological Institutes. These extracts I make the rather, because much of what is contained therein is mere history, though blended with argument. I shall begin with Watson himself.

The first step in this inquiry is, to ascertain the existence, age,

and actions of the leading persons mentioned in Scripture as the instruments by whom, it is professed, the revelations they contain were made known.

With respect to these PERSONS, it is not necessary that our attention should be directed to more than two, MOSES and CHRIST,—one the reputed agent of the Mosaic, the other the author of the Christian Revelation; because the evidence which establishes their existence and actions, and the period of both, will also establish all that is stated in the same records as to the Subordinate and succeeding agents.

“To the existence and the respective antiquity ascribed in the scriptures to Moses and Jesus Christ, the founders of the Jewish and Christian religion, many ancient writers give ample testimony: who, being neither of the Jewish nor Christian religion, cannot be suspected of having any design to furnish evidence of the truth of either. Among these writers are Manetho, Cheron, Apollonius, Lysimachus, Strabo, Justin, Pliny, Tacitus, Juvenal, Longinus, the ORPHIC verses, and Diodorus Siculus. Justin Martyr expressly says, that most of the historians, poets, lawgivers, and philosophers of the Greeks, mention Moses as the leader and prince of the Jewish nation.

“As to CHRIST, it is only necessary to give the testimony of two historians, whose antiquity no one ever thought of disputing. SUETONIUS mentions him by name, and says, that Claudius expelled from Rome those who adhered to his cause. TACITUS records the progress which the Christian religion had made; the violent death its founder had suffered; that he flourished under the reign of Tiberius; that Pilate was then procurator of Judea; and that the original author of this profession was Christ. Thus not only the real existence of the founder of Christianity, but the period in which he lived is exactly ascertained from writings, the genuineness of which has never been doubted.

“With respect to the scriptures of the Old Testament, the language in which they are written is a strong proof of their antiquity. The Hebrew ceased to be spoken as a living language soon after the Babylonish captivity, and the learned agree that there was no grammar made for the Hebrew till many ages after. The difficulty of a forgery, at any period after the time of that captivity, is therefore apparent. Of these books too, there was a Greek translation made about two hundred and eighty-seven years before the Christian era, and laid up in the Alexandrian library.

“Josephus gives a catalogue of the sacred books among the Jews, in which he expressly mentions the five books of Moses, thirteen of the prophets, four of hymns and moral precepts; and if, as many critics maintain, Ruth was added to Judges, and the lamentations of Jeremiah to his prophecies, the number agrees with those of the Old Testament as it is received at the present day.

"The Samaritans, who separated from the Jews, many hundred years before the birth of Christ, even before the Babylonish captivity, have in their language a Pentateuch, in the main exactly agreeing with the Hebrew; and the pagan writers before cited, with many others, speak of Moses not only as a lawgiver and a prince, but as the author of books esteemed sacred by the Jews."

These books could never have been surreptitiously put forth in the name of Moses, as the Argument of *LESLIE* most fully proves.

"Could any man, now at this day, invent a book of statutes or acts of parliament for England, and make it pass upon the nation as the only book of statutes that ever they had known? As impossible was it for the books of Moses (if they were invented in any age after Moses) to have been received for what they declared themselves to be, viz., the statutes and municipal law of the nation of the Jews: and to have persuaded the Jews, that they had owned and acknowledged these books, all along from the days of Moses, to that day in which they were first invented; that is, that they had owned them before they had ever so much as heard of them.

"But now let us descend to the utmost degree of supposition, viz. that these things were practised before these books of Moses were forged; and that those books did only impose upon the nation, in making them believe that they had kept these observances in memory of such and such things as were inserted in those books.

"For example, suppose I should now forge some romantic story of strange things done a thousand years ago; and, in confirmation of this, should endeavour to persuade the Christian world that they had all along, from that day to this, kept the first day of the week in memory of such a hero, an Apollonius, a Barcosbas, or a Mahomet; and had all been baptized in his name; and sworn by his name, and upon that very book (which I had then forged, and which they never saw before) in their public judicatures; that this book was their gospel and law, which they had ever since that time, these thousand years past, universally received and owned, and none other. I would ask any deist, whether he thinks it possible that such a cheat could pass, or such a legend be received as the gospel of Christians: and that they could be made to believe that they never had any other gospel?"

This able reasoning has never been refuted, nor can be; and if the books of the law must have been written by Moses, it is as easy to prove, that Moses himself could not in the nature of the thing have deceived the people by an imposture, and a pretence of miraculous attestations, in order, like some later lawgivers among the heathens, to bring the people more willingly to submit to his institutions. The very instances of miracles he gives rendered this impossible. "Suppose," says the same

writer, "any man should pretend, that yesterday he divided the Thames, in presence of all the people of London, and carried the whole city, men, women, and children, over to Southwark on dry land, the waters standing like walls on both sides: I, say, it is morally impossible that he could persuade the people of London that this was true, when every man, woman, and child, could contradict him, and say, that this was a notorious falsehood, for that they had not seen the Thames so divided, nor had gone over on dry land.

"As to Moses, I suppose it will be allowed me, that he could not have persuaded six hundred thousand men that he had brought them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea; fed them forty years, without bread, by miraculous manna, and the other matters of fact, recorded in his books, if they had not been true."

By these arguments, the genuineness and authenticity of the books of Moses are established; and as to those of the prophets, which, with some predictions in the writings of Moses, comprise the prophetic branch of the evidence of the divine authority of the revelations they contain, it can be proved, both from Jewish tradition, the list of Josephus, the Greek translation, and from their being quoted by ancient writers, that they existed many ages before several of those events occurred.

We have seen the manner in which these rules are applied to the books of Moses. The author thus applies them to the Gospel:

"Baptism and the Lord's Supper were instituted as perpetual memorials of these things; and they were not instituted in after-ages, but at the very time when these things were said to be done; and have been observed without interruption, in all ages through the whole Christian world, down all the way from that time to this. And Christ himself did ordain apostles and other ministers of his gospel, to preach and administer the sacraments, and to govern his church, and that always, even unto the end of the world. Accordingly, they have continued by regular succession to this day, and no doubt, ever shall, while the earth shall last. So that the Christian clergy are as notorious a matter of fact, as the tribe of Levi among the Jews.

"The truth of the Gospel history (independent of the question of the inspiration of the sacred writers) rests upon the same basis with the truth of other ancient books, and its *pretensions* are to be impartially examined by the same rules by which we judge of the credibility of all other historical monuments. And if we compare the merit of the sacred writers, as *historians*, with that of other writers, we shall be convinced that they are inferior to none who ever wrote, either with regard to *knowledge of persons, acquaintance with facts, candour of mind, and reverence for truth.*"

No public contradiction of this history was ever put forth by the Jewish rulers to stop the progress of a hateful religion, though they had every motive to contradict it, both in justifica-

tion of themselves, who were publicly charged as "*murderers*" of the "Just One," and to preserve the people from the infection of the spreading delusion.

We have already quoted the testimonies of Tacitus and Suetonius to the existence of Jesus Christ, the founder of the Christian religion, and of his crucifixion in the reign of Tiberius, and during the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate, the time in which the Evangelists place that event. Other references to heathen authors, who incidentally allude to Christ, his religion, and followers, might be given; such as Martial, Juvenal, Epictetus, Trajan, the younger Pliny, Adrian, Apuleius, Lucian of Samosata, and others, some of whom also afforded testimonies to the destruction of Jerusalem, at the time and in the circumstances predicted by our Saviour, and to the antiquity and genuineness of the books of the New Testament. But, as it is well observed by the learned Lardner, in his "Collection of Jewish and Heathen Testimonies," "Among all the testimonies to Christianity which we have met with in the first ages, none are more valuable and important than the testimonies of those learned philosophers who wrote against us; CELSUS in the second century, PORPHYRY and HIEROCLES in the third, and JULIAN in the fourth."

The historical evidence of the antiquity and genuineness of the books ascribed to Moses, and those which contain the history of Christ and the establishment of his religion, being thus complete, the integrity of the copies at present received is the point next in question.

With respect to the scriptures of the Old Testament, the list of Josephus, the Septuagint translation, and the Samaritan Pentateuch, are sufficient proofs that the books which are received by us as sacred, are the same as those received by the Jews and Samaritans long before the Christian era. For the New Testament, besides the quotations from almost all the books now included in that volume and references to them by name in the earliest Christian writers, catalogues of authentic scriptures were published at very early periods, which, says Dr. Paley, "though numerous, and made in countries at a wide distance from one another, differ very little, differ in nothing material, and all contain the four Gospels.

"Farther, at certain stated seasons, the law was publicly read before all the people of Israel; and it was appointed to be kept in the ark, for a constant memorial against those who transgressed it. Their king was required to *write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which was before the priests, the Levites, and to read therein all the days of his life*; their priests also were commanded to *teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord had spoken to them by the hand of Moses*; and parents were charged, not only to make it familiar to themselves, but also to teach it diligently to their children; besides which, a severe prohibition was annexed, against either making any

addition to, or diminution from, the law. Now, such precepts as these could not have been given by an impostor who was adding to it, and who would wish men to forget rather than enjoin them to remember it; for, as all the people were obliged to know and observe the law under severe penalties, they were, in a manner, the trustees and guardians of the law, as well as the priests and Levites. The people, who were to teach their children, must have had copies of it; the priests and Levites must have had copies of it; and the magistrates must have had copies of it, as being the law of the land. Farther, after the people were divided into two kingdoms, both the people of Israel and those of Judah still retained the same book of the law: and the rivalry or enmity that subsisted between the two kingdoms, prevented either of them from altering or adding to the law.

"Lastly, the *agreement of all the manuscripts* of the Old Testament (amounting to nearly eleven hundred and fifty) which are known to be extant, is a clear proof of its uncorrupted preservation.

"Although the various readings, which have been discovered by learned men, who have applied themselves to the collection of every known manuscript of the Hebrew scriptures, amount to many thousands, yet these differences are of so little *real* moment, that their laborious collations afford us scarcely any opportunities of correcting the sacred text in important passages.

"Equally satisfactory is the evidence for the integrity and uncorruptness of the New Testament in any thing material. The testimonies adduced in the preceding section in behalf of the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament are, in a great measure, applicable to show that it has been transmitted to us entire and uncorrupted. But, to be more particular, we remark, that the uncorrupted preservation of the books of the New Testament is manifest

"First. *From their contents*; for, so early as the two first centuries of the Christian era, we find the very same *facts* and the very same *doctrines* universally received by Christians, which we of the present day believe on the credit of the New Testament.

"Secondly. *Because a universal corruption of those writings was impossible, nor can the least vestige of such a corruption be found in history.* They could not be corrupted during the life of their authors; and before their death, copies were dispersed among the different communities of Christians, who were scattered throughout the then known world. Within twenty years after the ascension, churches were formed in the principal cities of the Roman empire; and in all these churches, the books of the New Testament, especially the four Gospels, were read as a part of their public worship, just as the writings of Moses and the prophets were read in the Jewish synagogues. Nor would the use of them be confined to public worship; for these books were not, like the Sybilline Oracles, locked up from the perusal of the public, but were exposed to public investigation. Whatever

controversies, therefore, arose among different sects (and the church was very early rent with fierce contentions on doctrinal points,) the Scriptures of the New Testament were received and appealed to by every one of them, as being conclusive in all matters of controversy.

"Third. *From the agreement of all the manuscripts.* The *thirty thousand* various readings which are said to be found in the manuscripts collated by Dr. Mill, and the *hundred and fifty thousand* which Griesbach's edition is said to contain, in no degree whatever affect the general credit and integrity of the text.

"Fourth. The last testimony to be adduced for the integrity and uncorruptness of the New Testament, is furnished by the *agreement of the ancient versions and quotations from it, which are made in the writings of the Christians of the first three centuries, and in those of the succeeding fathers of the church.*"—*Horne's Introd.*

How insignificant, how contemptible do all the cavillings of scepticism appear, relative to the numerous manuscripts, the various readings, the interpolations, the alterations, and the mistranslations of the Bible, compared with such reasoning, such evidence as this.

One point more I will bring into view, with which I will close this letter; which point is, the rapid spread of Christianity during the first three centuries, and its glorious triumph over paganism, with all its Elysian fields, its *human* deities, its oracles and prodigies, its pomp and power. Here again I shall make further extracts.

"The fact to be accounted for is, that the first preachers of the gospel, though unsupported by human power, and uncommended by philosophic wisdom, and even in opposition to both, succeeded in effecting a revolution in the opinions and manners of a great portion of the civilized world, to which there is no parallel in the history of mankind.*

Tacitus, about A.D. 62, speaking of Christianity, says,—
 "This pernicious superstition, though checked for a while, broke out again, and spread not only over Judea, but reached the city of Rome also. At first, they only were apprehended who confessed themselves to be of that sect; afterward, a *vast multitude* were discovered and cruelly punished." Pliny, the governor of

* The success of Mahomet, though sometimes pushed forward as a parallel, is, in fact, both as to the means employed and the effect produced, a perfect contrast. The *means* were conquest and compulsion; the *effect* was to legalize and sanctify, so to speak, the natural passions of men for plunder and sensual gratification; and it surely argues either a very frail judgment, or a criminal disposition to object, that a contrast so marked should ever have been exhibited as a correspondence. Men were persuaded, when they were not *forced*, to join the ranks of the Arabian impostor by the hope of plunder, and a present and future life of brutal gratification. Men were persuaded to join the apostles by the evidence of truth, and by the hope of future spiritual blessings, but with the certainty of present disgrace and suffering.

Pontus and Bithynia, near eighty years after the death of Christ, in his well-known letter to Trajan, observes—"The contagion of this superstition has not only invaded cities, but the smaller towns also, and the whole country." He speaks too of the idol temples having been "*almost forsaken*." To the same effect the Christian fathers speak. About A.D. 140, Justin Martyr writes—"There is not a nation, Greek or barbarian, or of any other name, even of those who wander in tribes, and live in tents, among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered to the father and creator of the universe in the name of the crucified Jesus." In A.D. 190, Tertullian, in his Apology, appeals to the Roman governors—"We were but of yesterday, and we have filled your cities and towns; the camp, the senate, and the forum." In A.D. 220, Origen says—"By the good providence of God, the Christian religion has so flourished and increased, that it is now preached freely, and without molestation."

But the great fact is, that in the year 300, *Christianity became the established religion of the Roman empire, and paganism was abolished*: and it follows from this event, that the religion which thus became triumphant after unparalleled trials and sufferings, must have established itself, previously to its receiving the sanction of the state, in the belief of a great majority of the *one hundred and twenty millions* of people supposed to be contained in the empire, or no emperor would have been insane enough to make the attempt to change the religion of so vast a state, nor, had he made it, could he have succeeded.

The increase of Christians implied even more than miracles; such was the holy character of the majority, during the continuance of the reproach and persecutions which followed the Christian name; such the patience with which they suffered, and the fortitude with which they died; that the *influence of God* upon their hearts is as manifest in the new and hallowed character which distinguished them, and the meek, forgiving, and passive virtues which they exhibited, to the astonishment of the heathen, as his *power* in the miracles by which their attention was first drawn to examine that truth which they afterward believed and held fast to death.

To give the preceding view of the spread and triumph of Christianity its full weight, and to show that it must have been propagated by supernatural means, let us consider the comparatively slow progress made by modern missionaries (possessed of no miraculous powers,) in *their* attempts to spread it in heathen lands in our own day. If this consideration is not sufficient to break down the obstinacy of scepticism, one resort more remains, which I know *would* do it. Here are the human race, the greater part of whom are to this day involved in the darkness of a moral midnight, practising the most stupid idolatry, polluted with the most filthy abominations, and crimsoned with the most murderous rites. Suffering humanity stretches forth her hands

those who are more enlightened in these respects, imploring compassion and kindly interposition. Where now are twelve sceptics, to go forth and achieve the mighty moral reformation so confessedly needed? Assuredly, among men so al, benevolent, and enlightened, as sceptics are, *a few* ought to be found ready to embark in so useful, so necessary, so momentous, an enterprise. Come forth, then, ye apostles of liberty, ye Carliles, ye Taylors, ye Wrights, and ye Owens, prove to mankind your genuine devotion to their real good, abandoning the bosom of civilized society, traversing mountains and deserts, wearied, cold, and hungry, suffering every trial, braving every danger, enduring every indignity, and sacrificing your ease, your health, and all temporal considerations, whatever, even that of life itself, for the amelioration of the condition of the pagan world. And when ye shall have reached the far distant regions of the East, adopt ye precisely the same course as ye yourselves say was adopted in spreading christianity. And if, ere you shall have grown grey, ye strike the oracle dumb, or dethrone one heathen divinity; if ye check the crushing wheels of a Juggernaut, and extinguish the blazing funeral pile of the self-immolating widow, and civilize and humanize your fellow beings: then would you give less dubious evidence of your philanthropy than do ye now in sticking to your chimney corners, and calumniating those already engaged in this benevolent enterprise; * and would likewise do more to hasten the overthrow of the Bible, than by merely cavilling against it to all eternity. Go then, if 'tis so easy a matter to transform a pagan Roman empire into a Christian state, and demonstrate this to mankind. On with your sandals; away with your superfluous garments; purse or scrip take ye none; and thus outfitted, hie ye to the "*celestial* empire." There preach in a plain tongue without its acquisition. There display your wonderful works, and utter your predictions. Then should we see how easily the old pagodas would be demolished, and superstition driven away.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

A hint by the way to some sects of pretended Christians, who, instead of obeying the divine injunction, to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, are continually slandering those who are doing this. If, they pretend, the latter do not preach to the heathen the *true* gospel, why do they go and preach it themselves!

TO ORIGEN BACHELER.

LETTER IX.

October 8, 1831.

I proposed, in this letter, to speak of the argument which is deduced from prophecy.*

In every age and in every nation there have men been found who thought it their interest first to excite, and then to gratify, the credulity of ignorance. Ancient and modern history, profane as well as sacred, is filled with stories of soothsayers, oracles, predictions, presentiments, and all the *et cetera* of prophetic pretension.

In looking, however, a little more closely at the subject, we shall not fail to remark how commonly it happens, that prophecies are so ambiguously worded, that the prophet's infallibility is safe, whatever may chance. I need hardly cite to you, in illustration, the well known answer of the Delphic oracle to King Pyrrhus, when he wished to aid the Tarentines against the Romans, and desired to be informed what would be the issue of his projected expedition :

"Credo te, Æacida, Romanos vincere posse ;"†

or that to Cræsus, King of Lydia,

χρoισος Ἴλυν διαθας, μεγαλην αρχην διαλυσει.‡

But you will tell me, perhaps, that though this apply to the Delphic, it will not apply to the Bible oracles ; these latter being always clear and unequivocal. Let us see ; and, as a specimen, let us select the only prophecy you adduced in your eighth letter—the most famous one, probably, in the Bible—that of Isaiah, regarding the miraculous conception.

* As in the case of miracles, so here also, it is no easy matter to decide what is (supernatural) prophecy. When I see a man drink daily a quart of rum, I may predict with safety that his life will be short ; yet shall I not, when the prediction is verified, be entitled to a place among prophets. There are men who see more clearly ahead than their fellows, and who predict what others think unlikely, but which, nevertheless, comes to pass. In one sense, these men may be called prophets.

But this objection I wave, and shall take it for granted, for the sake of argument, that we can always decide what a man can and what he cannot (unaided by supernatural power,) predict.

† The translation reads either, "*I believe that thou wilt conquer the Romans,*" or "*that the Romans will conquer thee.*" Pyrrhus adopted the former version ; and, when he lost his life, the oracle rescued its infallibility by explaining, that he *ought* to have adopted the latter.

‡ "*If Cræsus pass over the Halys, he will destroy a great empire.*" That empire was his own.

The prophecy (as recorded, chap. vii. of Isaiah,) is on this wise. King Ahaz is attacked by two other kings, Rezin and Pekah. Isaiah, by God's direction, comforts Ahaz, by telling him that they shall not prevail against him. God bids Ahaz ask a sign in confirmation of this prophecy. Ahaz declining, God says he will give him a sign : (ver. 14, 15, 16.)

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. *For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.*"*

Now what, in the name of common sense, has this to do with the coming of Christ? Were Pekah and Rezin killed "before Christ knew how to refuse the evil and choose the good?" Is it not the very essence of childishness to argue that Christ could be the virgin-born, *who was to be a sign to Ahaz, whose enemies, God said, should perish ere the child was old enough to know good from evil?* Theologians are laughing at us, when they place among the contents, at the head of the seventh chapter of Isaiah, "*Christ promised.*"

But now, suppose this were a passage such as common sense might construe into a prediction that a Christ, bringing peace and happiness on earth, should come. There is a much more distinct prophecy of his coming in Virgil; and you will not argue, I think, that Virgil is among the prophets:

*"Magnus ab integro seclorum nascitur ordo:
Jam redit et virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna.
Jam nova progenies cælo demittitur alto."*†

Rendered into English, it reads:

*"The integrity of times shall come again,
A virgin bring back ancient Saturn's reign;
Now is from heaven high
Descended a new progeny."*

But this is not all. Virgil goes on:

*"Tu modò nascenti puero quo ferrea primum
Desinet, ac toto surget gens aurea mundo,"* &c.‡

Or, as we may translate it:

*"The birth of that celestial child, by whom
The iron age shall cease, the golden come,"* &c.

And the poet proceeds, as you may read at your leisure, to give a description of the state of things under this heaven-descended child, not unlike the Christian millennium. If Isaiah,

* And, in fulfilment of the prophecy, we find, 2 Kings, chap. xv., ver. 30, Pekah killed by Hoshea, and 2 Kings, chap. xvi., ver. 9, Rezin slain by the King of Assyria. I beg our readers to peruse the whole seventh chapter of Isaiah, in order to satisfy themselves that I give the text and context fairly.

† *Bucolica Eclog.* 4, ver. 5.

‡ *Ibid.*, ver. 8.

then, be a prophet, how much more Virgil ! Are you prepared to believe in the inspiration of both, and to see the *Bucolica* henceforth bound up in the Bible ?

But other Bible prophecies, you may perhaps still argue, are more unequivocally worded than Isaiah's. True ; that very remarkable one imputed by Mark (chap xvi., ver. 15, &c.,) to Jesus : "Go ye unto all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. *And these signs shall follow them that believe* : in my name shall they cast out devils ; they shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

Here, I admit, is a clear, distinct prophecy. We are told plainly how believers shall henceforth be distinguished from unbelievers. The faithful, it is foretold, shall be known by these signs ; rattlesnakes shall not bite them ; arsenic shall not poison them ; the sick shall recover under their hands. All this is fair and open. One trifling circumstance remains to be considered : *whether we find this prophecy fulfilled.* Fortunately we can easily discover. In our days, as in the apostles,* there are "those that believe and are baptized." Do these signs follow them ? Do they take up the spotted mockeson, or the deadly copperhead, with impunity ? Can they drain the hemlock bowl, yet escape the fate of Socrates ? Do they supersede the medical profession by the laying on of hands ?*

Answer me. Are these things so ? You know they are not. You know that the poison of the death-herb and the venom of the reptile reach the life of him who believes as of him who believes not ; and that death is arrested as little by the touch of piety as of scepticism. You know that not a word of Mark's prophecy is fulfilled. And yet you persist in the assertion, that a writer thus glaringly convicted of falsehood, is inspired !

But it was to the early ages of the church, I think I hear you argue, that this prophecy alone applied. And who, I pray you, so restricts it. Origen Bachelier may ; Mark does not. You will excuse my preferring the latter, and taking the passage, *as it is written*, without any reservation whatever as to time ; the more especially as Matthew, in the corresponding passage, records the words : "Lo ! I am with you always, *even unto the end of the world.*"

This "end of the world," it is true, was not imagined by the evangelists to be at the distance of two thousand years. Matthew makes Jesus declare : "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then there shall appear the sign of

* This argument was first broached, I believe, by Ethan Allen, the revolutionary patriot of Vermont, in his "Oracles of Reason."

the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together the elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." "*Verily, I say unto you, THIS GENERATION SHALL NOT PASS, TILL ALL THESE THINGS BE FULFILLED.*"*

This is as plain as a prophecy can be. It tells us, in distinct detail, that the end of the world and the day of judgment should come, before the generation in which Matthew wrote should pass away. It *has* passed, and another, and another; and yet the sun and moon have *not* been darkened, the stars have *not* fallen, the angels have *not* gathered together the elect, and the world exists still.† Time, then, (that great revealer of truth) has, directly and positively, given the lie to the evangelist; but the evangelist's unerring infallibility is still defended, all the same!

One appeal to the childish prejudice of birth I have passed over in silence. Permit me now, since a second is attempted, to remind you, that unless we can steer altogether clear of national sectarianism, the public will conclude, (and most justly too) that we are unworthy to set our names to a grave discussion like this. The public feels (however lightly we may estimate its discernment) that he only merits respect as a controversialist who feels and writes as a citizen of the world. Were I, for instance, to waste our readers' time in an attempt to prove the truism, that if merit there be in American citizenship, it belongs to him who owes his rank as a republican to a deliberate act of selection, and not to a mere accident of birth—were I, I say, to touch upon any thing so irrelevant and so personal as this, every man of sense would strongly feel that the episode was highly indecorous—just as indecorous as were, on my opponent's part, an implied assertion, that no one born on the eastern side of the Atlantic might speak of the country of his adoption, or express an opinion regarding her great men. But too much of this.

For every thing I have said regarding Washington *I have given my authority*. It is not you, it is our readers, who are the judges what that authority is worth. The records of American history

* Matthew, chap. xxiv., ver. 29, 30, 31, 34.

† The early Christians, as in duty and consistency bound, believed St. Matthew. "In the primitive church," says Gibbon, (vol. i., chap. xv., of his "Decline and Fall,") "the influence of truth was very powerfully strengthened by an opinion, which, however it may deserve respect for its usefulness and antiquity, has not been found agreeable to experience. It was universally believed that the end of the world and the kingdom of heaven were at hand."

The various learned commentators, when, in spite of St. Matthew, they found the world still persisting to exist, have been hard pushed to defend the evangelist. Erasmus enlisted in his defence the aid of allegory and metaphor; and the learned Grotius (perceiving, probably, the extreme danger of permitting any portion of scripture to be allegorised away,) chose rather to insinuate that, for wise purposes, the pious deception was permitted to take place.—See Gibbon, vol. i., note 60 of chap. xv.

furnish *no* name that carries with it greater weight than that of Thomas Jefferson; and though you may not happen to know this, it is not the less true on that account. When I spoke of Washington's death-bed, *I had the account written by an eye-witness lying before me.* And most strongly does that account corroborate my opinion that Washington's religion was of the most liberal stamp. No clergymen around his death-bed. No protestations that in the dying hour religion afforded him aid. No praying. No repeating texts. No asking for a Bible to read a chapter. Not a syllable about the redeeming blood of Christ, or the saving efficacy of divine grace, or any of the rest of it. Not even a straw for the orthodox to catch at and work up in tract form, as "The Dying Testimony of that distinguished Christian, George Washington." True, the father of his country died the death of a patriot; he died as he had lived, in dignity and peace; but he left behind him not one word to warrant the belief that he was other than a sincere deist. Not one sentence you have quoted proves any thing more. Elias Hicks, too, spoke of the "divine author of our blessed religion;"* he, too, prayed and read from the Bible; he, too, spoke of "the pure and benign light of revelation;" he, too, regularly attended public worship; and he, too, was a man whose integrity was proverbial. What shadow of a reason have we for believing that the religion of the Hero of Mount Vernon was more orthodox than that of the philosopher of Long Island? Yet the one you claim for an orthodox Christian; and to the other you almost refuse the title of a deist.

I am amused by the way you dispose of John Adams and Benjamin Franklin. The former, you think, was religious when young and sceptical when old, the latter sceptical when young and religious when old. Of Adams, therefore, you say, that he was a sceptic only in his dotage, and of Franklin, that he was a sceptic only in his inexperienced youth. 'Twould be no easy matter to find a case which might not be got over by special pleading like this.

Your attempt to prove Franklin's orthodoxy by an epitaph, which seems to me more like a witty old printer's joke than a serious outpouring of piety, may be met by numerous quotations from his own writings. I have only room to adduce one as a specimen. It relates to the celebrated Methodist preacher, Whitfield, and shows clearly enough by what principles Franklin was influenced, when he showed favour to religion or kindness to religionists:

"Upon one of Whitfield's arrivals from England, at Boston, he wrote to me that he should come soon to Philadelphia, but knew not where he should lodge when there, as he understood his old

* You assert, in commenting on this phrase, that Washington spoke of the author of *the Scriptures* as divine. Pray adduce the passage that supports this. Not one that you quoted does; nor do I believe that such a passage can be found in Washington's writings.

friend and host, Mr. Benezet, was removed to Germantown. My answer was, 'You know my house; if you can make shift with its scanty accommodations, you will be most heartily welcome.' He replied that if I made that offer for Christ's sake I should not miss of a reward. And I returned: 'Don't let me be mistaken; it was not for *Christ's* sake, but for *your* sake.' One of our common acquaintance jocosely remarked, that, knowing it to be the custom of the saints, when they received any favour, to shift the burthen of the obligation from off their own shoulders and place it in heaven, I had contrived to fix it on earth."*

If you can persuade the public that a man who could write thus was an orthodox Christian, you will deserve credit for considerable ingenuity.

You must permit me to doubt the anecdote of Ethan Allen, until you produce some better historical evidence than a quotation from the New York Observer; the more especially as the story has a good deal the air of a made up one.

But sufficient of individuals, the best and wisest of whom have had their share of error. Instead, therefore, of further discussing the private opinions of distinguished democrats, let us turn to the book itself for evidence whether legitimacy does or does not obtain support from religion.

In Paul's epistle to the Romans, the thirteenth chapter, at the first verse, we read: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."

I know not what the private opinions of those sturdy patriots were, who, in the old Philadelphia State House, appended their signatures to the immortal document. But this I do know, that when they did so, it was in defiance of the Bible; it was in direct violation of the law of the New Testament. This I know, that, if deity be the author of the Christian scriptures, the signers of the declaration resisted the law, not of the King of England only, but of the God of heaven.

Needs it to remind you how emphatically the text quoted supports the conclusions thus drawn? "There is *no* power but of God." The power of George III., then, was of God. "He that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." The great scene on the fourth of July, then, was a RESISTING OF GOD'S ORDINANCES. Jefferson, Franklin, John Adams, John Hancock, and all the rest, *fought against God*. George Washington led on his troops *against God*. Every revolutionary blow was directed against God's anointed; it was a blow aimed against the divine authority—an act of rebellion, subversive of the ordinances of God. Ay, let us not veil the truth! *If a being who cannot lie penned the Bible, then George Washington and every soldier who*

* *Franklin's Memoirs*, written by himself.

drew sword in the republic's armies for liberty, expiate, at this moment, in hell-fire, the punishment of their ungodly strife! Then, too, John Hancock and every patriot whose name stands to America's Title Deed, have taken their places with the devil and his angels! All resisted the power; all, unless God lie, HAVE RECEIVED TO THEMSELVES DAMNATION!

The text is plain as language can make it; the conclusions irresistible. For my own part, did I believe the Bible and hope to reach heaven, I should feel certain not to find one revolutionary soldier there. I should know, that the poor Poles, who are now pouring their life-blood like water on the altar of their country's independence, shall never see the face of their offended maker, but shall sink from the dark battle-field to the darker arena of everlasting misery, there to expiate, by an eternity of torture, their reckless impiety in resisting the ordinances of God—embodied in the manifestoes of the Emperor Nicholas!

Whether, in this case, the celestial or the infernal regions be the preferable place of abode, is a question which I abstain from agitating.

In speaking of miracles, I have hitherto chiefly turned my remarks towards those of the New Testament; because, if any Bible miracles can be supposed to have a shadow of truth about them, these are they. The vast antiquity, extending far beyond the limits of written history,* of the Jewish books, the utter obscurity which therefore attaches to them, but, far more than all these, *their own internal evidence*, on which I have already dwelt—the odious immorality, the unexampled cruelty, the sullyng obscenity, and the unintelligible childishness, which alternately characterize the Old Testament pages—all these cry out so loudly, even to the duller ears and hearts, against the fancy that a benignant deity was their author, that I deem it a work of supererogation to weary our readers with one additional argument. But for this, I might proceed to remind you that no enlightened geologist thinks of denying that there have been, not one but many inundations—deluges if you please—which have submerged, at various periods, various portions of the globe;† and I might ask you what “monumental and institutory memorials, the world over,” confirm, as you assert they do, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the retrogression of the sun, the dividing of the Red Sea and Jordan, &c.; or what leading Bible *miracles* (for

* I find, in the Pentateuch, no mention made of writing on parchment. The *only* mode of preserving the laws spoken of is that I have alluded to. It must be supposed that then, as now, the most durable method of registering these so highly prized documents would be selected. Yet we hear of no other mode but this one. I hold this to be presumptive evidence in favour of the opinion, that the Jews were then in the habit of thus recording what they deemed nationally important. But the matter is immaterial.

† In proof of this we certainly have what you call “monuments;” that is, marine deposits, fossil remains, &c. But these geological phenomena are proofs of natural occurrences, produced in the great and gradual physical revolutions of the globe. It is idle to talk of their proving a miraculous deluge.

the outline of the Bible *history*, disconnected with its marvels, I have never denied; it may be true, it may not;) I might ask, I say, what leading miracles of the Bible are proved "by the annals of the human race?"

But enough of the Old Testament. It is too harshly in discordance with the comparatively enlightened spirit of this age, to be much longer defended or tolerated. It is already cast aside by thousands who still cling to the Christian Testament, with its softened morality and its more modern and more decent narrative. The Christian miracles form almost exclusively the substance of modern creeds and the foundation-stones of modern faiths; to them, then, let us give a little attention, and see how they compare with what you call "the lying wonders of popery."

I think it the very height of imprudence in a Bible apologist to say one single word against catholic evidence, or to breathe even a hint that "catholics can get pardoned for a falsehood for a very small sum of money, and get canonized for deception in the service of their church." It is scarcely three hundred years since the very name of protestant was first known.* Look for Christianity previous to that time, and what do you find? Catholicism. Ask who, before that era, had the keeping of the archives of Christianity? Catholics. To whose honour, through centuries on centuries of mental darkness, were entrusted the divine manuscripts? To the honour (in your own phrase,) of the "very Babylon of the Apocalypse." To whose integrity must we trust, when we believe in the original genuineness and the faithful and uncorrupted transcription, and transmission through fifteen centuries, of the gospel pages? To the integrity of the "very Babylon of the Apocalypse." Who are the sole authorities from whom Mosheim and Tillemont draw their ecclesiastical narratives, or Jones and Lardner their historical proofs of Christianity? The bishops and fathers and other distinguished sons of this same Apocalyptic Babylon, who, you remind us, "could get canonized for deception in their service of the church." In a word, who have been the theologians, defenders, martyrs, historians, representatives—and, until three hundred years ago, the *sole* advocates and representatives—of the Christian religion? Catholics.

Most unlucky, then, was your assertion regarding the small degree of credence due to catholic testimony. You forgot, that a council of catholics, who "could get canonized for deception," selected the Scriptures for us. You forgot, that the Christian church was, for more than a thousand years, a nonentity, unless that "holy catholic church," of which the pope is the head, be recognized as such. In short, you forgot, that in rashly meddling with this stone, you were shaking to its foundations the whole Christian edifice.

* It was first employed, I believe, during the diet at Spire, in the year 1529.

So much for your objections to the "lying wonders of popery,"* on the score of the insufficiency of mere *catholic* evidence.

My authority for the Florentine miracle I have already given you; expressing, at the same time, my surprise, that a traveller who displays throughout his work so much taste and learning as Mr. Forsyth, should have been deceived by its (apparent) evidences.

You ask for more satisfactory evidence of the Athanasian miracle of the speakers without tongues. I have already cited to you the particular work, volume, and page, in which Victor writes as I quoted for you. I have given you a collateral authority, namely, the French ecclesiastical historian *Ruinart*, adducing, also, volume and page. The passage I cited from *Æneas of Gaza*, was from his well known Dialogue on the Immortality of the Soul, the authenticity of which has never been disputed, any more than that of Victor's works, of which a complete edition was published, in 1696, by Pitiscus. And you are still dissatisfied? You still want, perhaps, some "monumental or institutory memorial." This, too, you can have. The emperor Justinian himself acknowledged and referred to the miracle in a *perpetual edict*, still extant.* Besides this, the historian Procopius, of whom it is doubtful whether he was a Christian or a pagan, mentions the circumstances in his "Wars with the Vandals and Goths."† The pagan Marcellinus adverts to it in his Chronicle of the Times;‡ and Gregory, surnamed "The Great," who was sent, at the time, by Pope Pelagius I., as Nuncio to Constantinople, has left on record his testimony to its truth.§

These men all lived within about a century. They all appeal to their personal knowledge, or the public notoriety, for the truth of their narration. Victor invites all to Zeno's palace, and challenges investigation; and that such investigation, thus publicly challenged, was permitted, appears from the statement of *Æneas*. If, under all those circumstances, the miracle was not a "matter of notoriety," what can be? The books I alluded to were all published, and open to investigation. That the passages are not interpolations I cannot take upon me to say; but if they are, it shows to what extent, and with what success, these transcription forgeries were carried on; and an additional doubt is thus cast on the accuracy of the gospel manuscripts themselves.

Of course there must be a flaw somewhere. But what I beg you to observe is, the great difficulty in discovering it. Again I put it to you: Can you furnish me one tenth as much proof for one single Bible miracle as I have given you for an Athanasian one? If you still adhere to your rules of historical evidence for miracles,

* *Justinian Codex*, lib. i., tit. xxvii.

† *Procopius, de Bell. Vandal.*, lib. i., cap. vii., p. 196.

‡ *Marcellin. in Chron.*, p. 45.

§ *Gregor. Magnus, Dialog.* iii., 32.

I do not see how you can hesitate here. Take heed, lest, after all, I do not seduce you yourself into a belief in this very "lying wonder of popery," and tempt you to invest with the same sanctity St. Matthew and St. Athanasius.

You are about to adduce evidence of some genuine modern miracles. This is consistent. And if you succeed in establishing these, then we shall have something like analogical evidence for ancient ones. But, to save trouble, let me beg you to bring forward nothing in regard to which you cannot give us name, place, date, and express reference to the confirming witnesses.

I have not time nor space to follow up my argument regarding the impossibility of human senses distinguishing between divine and Satanic agency. Nor is it necessary. Your argument that it is *not to be supposed*, that God would allow the devil thus to ape his power, is founded on a mere matter of opinion of yours. How can you tell what a being, "whose ways are not as our ways," is likely to permit or not to permit? He allowed the devil, if the Bible speak truth, to cheat man once; why not, then, a thousand times? For my own part, in regard to all earthly concerns, I trust my human senses; for I feel that, in such matters, they are trustworthy; in regard to immaterialities, supernatural agencies, marvellous appearances, and so on, I should distrust them, even were apparent prodigies acted before me. Why? Because I underrate the value of the evidence of our senses, that sole origin of all true knowledge? By no means. But because theological phenomena, if such exist, are too far removed from our cognizance, and too completely foreign to our nature, to be rationally submitted to earthly tests, or judged by the limited perceptions of humanity.

That to a disease of the senses, commonly termed *hallucination*, are to be traced many seemingly miraculous appearances, no enlightened physician will deny. In a late literary journal, published in Edinburgh, is an account of such a case. The patient, confined with an attack of inflammation on the chest, saw, one night on a chair, at the left side of his bed, a female figure, which he immediately recognized as that of a young lady who had died two years before. Being too weak to rise from bed, he attempted to touch the figure with a stick, which had been left near him, to knock for the nurse; but as soon as he placed a real object on the chair, the imaginary one disappeared. It re-appeared to him several times. "When he shut his eyes or turned his head," says the narrator, "he ceased to see the figure; by interposing his hand he could hide part of it, and it was shown, like any mere material substance, by the rays of the fire which fell upon and were reflected by it. He never supposed it real, but was unable to account for it on any philosophical principles within his knowledge. He spoke of it as the effect of imagination, produced by the perusal of 'Tales of Wonder,' and other ghost stories, when a boy." This case occurred in December, 1823; and similar cases may be found recorded in most of our best works on *physiology* and *pathology*. How many honest theolo-

gical dreams have had a similar origin, it is impossible to calculate. That the excited brains of religious enthusiasts have been visited with many such, we cannot doubt.

But that it would lead me too far, I might enlarge on the mental and moral effects which such enthusiasm produces. But, in this land of revivals and camp meetings, the details were superfluous. The American public need hardly be reminded, how often the convulsions of conversion are succeeded by the ravings of insanity,* or by that moody melancholy which seeks in suicide an escape from unearthly dreams of horror, too frightful for mortal endurance.†

* In the "Courier and Enquirer" of this morning (September 14), I find one of those daily transpiring incidents, which attest this most frightful influence of religious excitement.

"On the evening of the eighth instant, Mr. Stephen Miller of New Canaan retired to rest, with his wife and two children in the same chamber. About midnight Mrs. Miller awoke her husband on account of a severe thunder-storm then raging. He sprung from his bed, began to pray, saying that the day of judgment was coming, &c. He then seized his wife and commenced striking and biting her severely; impressed, as she supposes, with an idea that the devil had transformed himself into her likeness. He then endeavoured to thrust her out of the window; but, after a severe scuffle, she escaped, divested of her night-dress, and fled in that state through the storm to a neighbour's house.

"In the meantime, the husband, imagining (by his own account,) the devil to be in the children, seized them, maltreated them as he had done his wife, and at last threw both from the chamber window, a height of about twelve feet. Hearing them still below, he let himself down after them by a sheet, and pounded their heads with a stone; throwing one, a boy about a year old, through a window into the cellar. When the neighbours arrived, they found him sitting near the window, swinging a club to keep the devil out of the cellar. The little girl was found to be quite dead; the boy survived only a few hours.

"The husband was removed to undergo a judicial investigation, and has since been committed for trial. The wife still lies suffering from personal injury, and in a state verging to alienation of mind.

"Mr. Miller was universally respected by his neighbours as an exemplary man, and kind and affectionate to his family. But all his earthly prospects have now been blasted by his own hands.

"The cause of this domestic desolation is told in a single word. Mr. Miller was a *religious maniac*. About two months since, a 'four days' meeting' was held in the church to which he belongs; and as is usual on such occasions, all the most frightful imaginings of judgment, the devil, and an endless hell, were brought to bear on the weak and timid. The impression produced on Mr. Miller was little likely to lose its strength in the atmosphere which he breathed; for prayer meetings, conferences, anxious meetings, &c., were almost as frequent as the returning evening; and Mr. M. was a constant attendant. For five days previous to the murder of his children, he had been fasting and praying with so much zeal and strictness, that he took little food, and would scarcely allow his wife to do the most necessary labour."

So far the account, which, for brevity's sake, I have somewhat abridged from the original. Had any doings set on foot and encouraged by *sceptics*, led even to one such horrible catastrophe, it would have rung from Maine to Florida, as an unanswerable proof of the "frightful consequences of infidelity."

† In a late number of a New York daily paper, I find no less than *four* instances of suicide recorded, all from religious excitement.

Mrs. Laura Holcomb, wife of Mr. Lorry Holcomb, committed suicide by hanging herself, a few weeks since, in Peru. The verdict of the jury was: "Mental derangement, caused by religious excitement."

Mrs. Aurelia, wife of Alba Lyman, of Guilford, put a period to her exist-

And this leads me to advert once more to the subject you have so irrelevantly dragged into this controversy, as a convenient scarecrow ; I mean, my opinion regarding suicide. It is all very well, and, of course to be expected, that you should disapprove it ; but the fuss you make about it, as "a horrid feature of infidelity," and a "diabolical sentiment," is altogether out of character. First, it is no feature of *infidelity* ; my opinion thereon was formed before I was a sceptic, and is the characteristic of no particular creed : very likely many who agree with me in other things would dissent here, and many who dissent from me in other opinions might agree in this. But secondly, it is somewhat too much to stigmatize as a "diabolical sentiment" that which was cherished and approved by the high-souled and virtuous, if even mistaken, stoics of ancient Greece ; which has such names as those of the patriot Brutus, of the incorruptible Cato, of the self-devoting Arria,* to sanction it ; which has been excused or defended by

ence by cutting her throat with a razor, on the 29th of May last. "She was impelled to the fatal act," says the Norwich Journal, "under the belief that she had been unfaithful and insincere in all her acts since she made a profession of religion."

"Mr. Barnabas Thayer, of Sydney, Me., travelling on Tuesday of last week," says a late number of the Christian Intelligencer, "to Massachusetts, put a period to his own existence, while on the road, by leaping from the carriage and throwing himself over Little River Bridge into the river. The cause of the act is indisputably to be traced to the influence of revivals. About the time of a late 'four days' meeting,' an intimate friend professed to 'meet with a change.' The 'experience' of this individual was so much more horrible than his own that he began to suspect the genuineness of his former conversion. The horrors of an eternal hell pressed heavily upon his mind, until he became wretched, declaring there was no mercy for him. His friends advised a journey; and on that journey he committed the fatal deed."

The fourth instance is that of a respectable young man in Brandon, Vt., "who recently," says a Boston paper, "put a period to his existence by the use of opium. There had been in the place a 'revival of religion.' The young man was thrown into deep distress in consequence of fancying himself exposed to an endless hell. A short time before his death, he was at work in his garden, in a state of partial delirium, when he exclaimed : 'Prepare to meet thy God,' went away, and committed the fatal deed!"

* The story of Arria has always been, for me, one of the most touching recorded in ancient history. Her husband, Pætus Cecinna, a Roman senator, being accused of conspiracy against Claudius, she accompanied him when carried to Rome, where chains, degradation, and ignominious death awaited him. She urged him to die the death of a freeman. He hesitated. She plunged the dagger in her own breast, and then presented it to her husband, with the memorable words : "It is not painful, Pætus !"

I met somewhere with a copy of beautiful verses commemorative of the Roman matron's courage and constancy, of which I still remember the three last stanzas :

"She brought to him his own bright brand,
She bent a suppliant knee,
And bad him, by his own right hand,
Die freeman, mid the free.
In vain ! the Roman fire was cold ;
Within the fallen warrior's mould ;
Then rose the wife and woman high,
And died, to teach him how to die.

half the great dramatists and poets, ancient and modern—by Pope,* for instance, by your favourite Addison,† by Thomas Moore,‡ and I know not how many others—it is somewhat too much, I say, to stigmatize as *diabolical*, however you might condemn as erroneous, a sentiment supported by such names as these. Mistake me not. All this is no reason at all why the principle should be approved, but it is a most excellent reason why you should not be so outrageous about it. Nor was it either classic predilection, or dramatic illusion, or poetical authority, that caused me to adopt it. It was the still, small voice of reason, which bids me judge all things by the severe and unbending standard of utility. I enter here into no defence of the principle; this is not the place for it. I ask you not how, if man possess not

“ ‘It is not painful, Pætus!’—Ay!
 Such words could Arria say,
 And view with an unaltered eye,
 Her life's blood ebb away:
 Professor of a purer creed,
 Nor scorn, nor yet condemn the deed,
 Which proves, unaided from above,
 The deep reality of love!
 Ages, since then, have swept away,
 Arria is but a name;
 Yet still is woman's love as strong,
 Still woman's soul the same;
 Still soothes the mother and the wife
 Her cherished ones, 'mid care and strife:
 'It is not painful, Pætus'—still
 Is love's word in the hour of ill.”

* Pope's “Elegy on an unfortunate young Lady,” who, deserted and reduced to misery in a foreign country, died by her own hand, is so well known that I need hardly cite from that sweetest and most plaintive of poems, the following hazarded lines:

“ Oh ever beauteous, ever friendly, tell
 Is it in heaven a crime to love too well?
 To bear too noble or too fond a heart,
 To act a lover's or a Roman's part?
 Is there no bright reversion in the sky
 For those who nobly live, or bravely die?”

† The story of Eustace Budgell, a relation of Addison's, who threw himself into the Thames in the year 1736, is well known. He left on his table Addison's celebrated tragedy of *Cato*, open at the noble Roman's soliloquy, and beside it, pencilled on a slip of paper, the lines:

“ What *Cato* did, and Addison approved
 Must needs be right——”

‡ “ Lives there the slave so lowly,
 Condemned to chains unholy,
 Who, could he burst
 His bonds at first,
 Would pine beneath them slowly?
 What soul, whose wrongs degrade it,
 Would wait till time decayed it,
 When thus its wing
 At once may spring
 To the throne of him who made it?”—Moore.

the right over his own life, he can delegate that right, as he does to the government of his country, when he subscribes to a social compact which decrees among its punishments that of death.* I leave all this as an unwarrantable digression,† and turn to examine the arguments quoted by you in support of the Bible authenticity, from the most eminent Christian polemics.

First, Watson and Leslie set about proving the existence of Moses and Jesus. I have never denied either; but I confess I am surprised to find the proofs so scanty.‡

Secondly. They adduce evidence to prove the authenticity of the Old Testament. What evidence? Here it is, and I especially pray our readers' attention to it.

"The Old Testament is very ancient. Witness the language. It was translated into Greek 287 B.C. Its books are enumerated by Josephus. (Josephus wrote about the year 70 after Christ.) It could not have been forged, because it contains the laws and customs of the Jews; and unless these *had* been their laws and customs, the Jews could not have been made to receive them as such. Its miracles must be true; for, if not true, the whole nation, when they were published, would have risen up to contradict them."

Let our readers carefully peruse the extracts you have given, and say if this be not *the whole proof* adduced.

It was Chesterfield, I believe, who said to his son, when about to enter on public life, "Come, and see how easily the world is

* No principle, not only in *law* but in *justice*, is better established than this, that "what a man does not himself possess, he cannot convey to another."

† Since my motive in passing over in silence, as I ought to do, your second catch-question regarding child-murder, might be misconstrued, and since it has long been the fashion thus to lay traps for heretical reformers, I here subjoin in a note, that I may not load the text with such notorious irrelevancies, what I have to say on the question.

I most fully admit the principle, that *utility* is the rational test of right and wrong, and had my opponent made out that, all things considered, the Spartan regulation was more useful (or, to use a synonymous term, more beneficial,) to society than the reverse, I should at once accede to its propriety. But what does he tell us? It "would remove the principal obstacle to murder." If it would, is not this, on the score of utility, an all-sufficient reason against it? Even those who may doubt whether it would have any such effect, must admit, that if the human race were to be thus improved, it would be at the expense of cruel suffering and violence to the most amiable of human feelings, those which prompt us to nourish and cherish the helplessness of infancy.

These practical considerations it is (and not those panic hesitations that forbid us to look *any* subject in the face,) which turn the eye of the more enlightened among modern economists to some milder mode of physical melioration than that which Lycurgus selected. What remedy I have proposed to substitute for that of the Athenian lawgiver, you would not now require to ask, had you taken the trouble carefully to peruse the little work of Moral Physiology, which has so largely attracted your indignation. On page 34 of that treatise, it is explicitly stated; and thither, therefore, I refer such of our readers as may think my sentiment on the subject worth examining.

‡ Tacitus' famous passage appears to me, however, sufficient evidence of the existence of Jesus.

governed." We might most strictly apply a similar sentiment here, and say, "Read, and see how easily the world is duped."

The Old Testament is very ancient, as we may see by the language; *therefore* the Pentateuch was written by Moses about fourteen hundred and fifty years before Christ! Josephus, fifteen hundred years after, quotes the books as genuine; *therefore* they are genuine! The allusions to and descriptions of the manners and laws of the Jews as contained in the Pentateuch, correspond with the actual laws and institutions of the Jews; *therefore* all the marvels mixed up with them must be true! The miracles would have been contradicted as soon as published by Moses,* if not genuine; *therefore* they are genuine!

I should be ashamed of myself if any child of common capacity whom I had educated to the age of twelve, could not detect at once the flimsy fallacy of such reasoning, unaided by a single hint, except from his own common sense. Who denies that there may be some truth in the Old Testament?—that some of the outlines of the story, including the details of Jewish laws and ceremonies, may be correct? Not I, for one. And because there is some truth in Livy, are all his miracles to be swallowed? Who denies that the Old Testament existed 287 B.C.? Not I, for one; but some few years intervened between 1450 B.C. and 287 B.C. Suppose it could be proved (which it notoriously cannot) that the Pentateuch did exist, just as at present, say *one thousand years* before Christ; what then? Could not a historian lie with impunity five hundred years after the events he pretends to record (and those in a remote and most barbarous age) happened? Would there be any thing so very miraculous in a man collecting the wild legends of his nation, embodying these in a narrative, and declaring it authentic? And where were the "men, women, and children to contradict him," and "say they were notorious falsehoods?" They had been, for five hundred years, in their graves. Or was there any thing so inconceivably miraculous in such a historian making the history of the origin and character of the Jewish law correspond to the law as he found it? But I lose my time in refuting such bubbles as these.†

* They talk just as if Moses had had a printing-press at his command, and used it, like our Congress, to print his laws and regulations, as well as his history, placing his book, when published, in the hands of all, that, if untrue, it might be immediately contradicted by a counter-publication.

† If it were not a waste of time, I might remark upon the extravagant inconsistency of assuming, (as Horne, cited by Watson, does) certain statements given in the book, such as that, from Moses' time, the priests read the Old Testament regularly to the Jews every Sabbath day; that the Israelites taught it in these early days to their children, and therefore must have each a copy of it; (why so, by the way? do not we teach our children the common laws of the land without any copy of them?)—of first assuming, I say, such passages from the book itself as infallible authority, and then, by them, proving the authenticity of the book! It would have been a saving of trouble, and would have been no whit more inconsistent, to assume the truth of the whole book, at once.

Let us look now, for a moment, at the proofs of the authenticity of the New Testament, which alone, indeed, are worthy of a serious reply. Let us again condense the argument.

"Proofs of genuineness of New Testament:—Baptism and Lord's supper.* Merit of the evangelists as historians. (No proof of this given, except bare assertion.) Quotations of the fathers and even of adversaries, from and after the close of the second century,† who cite from some portions of the New Testament, the former to defend and the latter to refute them. Incidental allusions of historians to the sect of Christians. To this we may add a former argument of yours, viz. : the admission of Celsus regarding the miracles of Christ, which he attributed to magic."

Now what does all this amount to? Simply to this. That in the reigns of Claudius and Nero, a sect existed called Christians. Who denies this? Not I, for one. That about the year 180, certain manuscripts, similar to portions of what are now books of the New Testament, were in existence. Who denies this? I do not.

But what of it? Are the books genuine, because a certain sect, one hundred and fifty years after the death of Christ, thought them so? Are the miracles therein recorded to be implicitly believed by us, because certain men, living a century and a half after they were said to have been performed, believed, or rather *said* they believed, them? Or are these miracles proved, because an opponent of these men, nearly as ignorant as they, ascribed them to magic? Pagan miracles can be proved in the same way. *The early Christians themselves held the very same opinion regarding Paganism as Celsus seems to have done regarding Christianity.* "The Christians," says Gibbon, "who by the interposition of evil spirits could so readily explain every preternatural appearance, were disposed, and even desirous, to admit the most extravagant fictions of the pagan mythology."‡ If the admissions

And then, too, there is positive proof (if we are to trust the record) even in the Old Testament itself, that the book was *not* read weekly to the people; that from the days of Joshua, (B.C. 1450,) to those of Nehemiah, (about 450 B.C.,) the people had never dwelt in booths on the feast of the seventh month, as the law commands, *and had no idea that there was any such command in the law at all.* For one thousand years, then, they were ignorant of and neglected to perform what was contained in this very law which, you would fain have us believe, they heard repeated to them every seventh day!—See *Nehemiah*, chap. viii., especially ver. 14 and 17.

* How, in common sense's name, can the existence of certain ceremonies now, prove the performance of certain miracles two thousand years ago?

† Irenæus, the *very* first who is even pretended to have cited the evangelists by name, wrote from 178 to 192.

‡ *Decline and Fall*, chap. xv. Lest you complain of misrepresentation from a historian who, however universally recognized as impartial, has a somewhat heterodox reputation, you shall have the authority of the fathers themselves. I refer you to Justin Martyr, in his *Apolog. Major.*, by *Athenagoras Legat.*, cap. xxii., &c.; also to the pious *Lactantius, Instit. Divin.*, ii., 14—19.

of Celsus prove the miracles of Christianity, those of the early Christians must be equally allowed to prove the miracles of paganism. Are you ready to believe both?

Now, it is true that the evangelists are cited by Celsus in the second century, by Porphyry some time after, and by the Christian father Irenæus about the year 180. It is also true that Irenæus is *the very first among the Christian fathers* who does cite the evangelists by name. Not one of the *apostolic fathers**—to wit, Barnabas (about 71), Clemens Romanus (about 96), the shepherd of Hermas (about 100), St. Ignatius (about 107), Polycarp (about 108), and Papius (about 116)—not one of these fathers mention Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.† Neither does Justin Martyr (140), Tatian (172), nor Hegisippus (173). All this is very strange; that not one of these holy fathers down to Irenæus, should mention the gospels or even name the historians of Christ.‡

For a *century and a half*, then, after Jesus' death, we have no means whatever of substantiating even the existence of the gospels, as now bound up in the New Testament. There is a perfect blank of one hundred and forty years; and a most serious one it

And how is this blank filled up by cotemporary historians? Philo-Judæus, the well known Jewish historian, *was a cotemporary of Christ*. He was sent by the Jews as ambassador to Rome, six or (as some have it) eight years after the usually received date of the death of Jesus. He must have been in or near Jerusalem, at the very time of the crucifixion; yet *not one word is there, in his history, regarding Christ or the Christians, or their scriptures*. Josephus, who wrote his celebrated history of the Jews some forty or fifty years after Christ's death, *does not even allude to the Christian books or to the Christian sect*.§ Suetonius (about 118) merely speaks of the Christians as "a class of men possessing a new and pernicious superstition."|| Tacitus (about the same time) tells us of "those men who, under the vulgar

* This term is commonly applied to those early fathers, living before the year 120, who might, by possibility, have associated with Christ, his apostles, and the evangelists.

† No Christian apologist even pretends that they did; but that, even in such a case, you may have authority for the assertion, here it is, from the learned Dodwell. "We have at this day," says he, "certain most authentic ecclesiastical writers of the times, as *Clemens Romanus, Barnabas, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp*, who wrote in the same order I have named them, and after the writers of the New Testament. But in Hermas *you will not find one passage or any other mention of the New Testament*; nor in all the rest is any one of the evangelists named."—*Dodwell's Dissert. on Irenæus*.

‡ It appears next to incredible, that if the evangelists were then received as holy authority, not one of these defenders of Christianity should even have named them.

§ The famous interpolation, so long triumphantly cited by Christians from the Jewish historian, is now, by common consent, abandoned as a forgery.

|| Suetonius' Life of Nero. chap. xvi.

appellation of Christians, were already branded with deserved infamy ;” he adds, that they derived their name from Christ who was executed under Pontius Pilate, and he details the cruel punishments inflicted on them by Nero.* Neither from Christian nor heathen, then, have we the slightest clue to the history of the gospels for a century and a half after Christ’s death.

Nor is this all. The most eminent men of the first and second centuries, who had the best of all opportunities of judging the new religion, of deciding whether its miracles were genuine and its pretensions well-founded, treat it either with silent contempt, or with slighting disparagement. To this Gibbon eloquently alludes in the following passage. After adverting to the fact that Christianity, as its founder had predicted, was cheerfully received by the poor and simple, he continues :

“We stand in need of such reflections to comfort us for the loss of some illustrious characters, which, in our eyes, might have seemed the most worthy of the heavenly present. The names of Seneca, of the elder and younger Pliny, of Tacitus, of Plutarch, of Galen, of the slave Epictetus, and of the emperor Marcus Antoninus, adorn the age in which they flourished and exalt the dignity of human nature. They filled with glory their respective stations, either in active or contemplative life ; their excellent understandings were improved by study ; philosophy had purified their minds from the prejudices of the popular superstition ; and their days were spent in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue. Yet all these sages (it is no less an object of surprise than of concern) overlooked or rejected the perfection of the Christian system. Their language or their silence equally discovers their contempt for the growing sect, which, in their time, had diffused itself over the Roman empire. Those among them who condescend to mention the Christians, consider them only as obstinate or perverse enthusiasts, who exacted an implicit submission to their mysterious doctrines, without being able to produce a single argument that could engage the attention of men of sense and learning.”†

While it is fair to admit, that the democratic tendency of many of Jesus’ precepts had its share in alienating the minds of these eminent men, who were, doubtless, more or less tinctured with that spirit of exclusive pretension which only in modern times is found (and yet but rarely) among the learned and the rich ; it is yet undeniable that the utter neglect or contempt of Christianity by every one of those excellent men and enlightened philosophers is

* Tacitus’ *Annals*, xv. 44.

† Dr. Lardner, in his first and second volumes of *Jewish and Christian testimonies*, collects and illustrates those of Pliny the younger, of Tacitus, of Galen, of Marcus Antoninus, and perhaps of Epictetus (for it is doubtful whether that philosopher meant to speak of the Christians). The new sect is totally unnoticed by Seneca, the elder Pliny, and Plutarch.

an argument of no common force in proof, that Christianity, during the two first centuries, *when the proofs of a divine mission* (if ever they existed) *ought to have been the strongest, had no proofs to offer, such as a man of education even thought worth noticing or refuting.* It is true, that though the inquiring minds of these sages, who lived within a century or a century and a half of the date of the gospels, and in the very empire which saw Christ born, found no proof whatever even worth examining, of the Christian miracles; yet our reader faith, at the distance of eighteen centuries, finds proof positive of their authenticity. But it remains to be seen, whether we, walking by faith, or they, walking as it were by sight, have decided on securer data, or come to the more rational conclusions.

Nor is even this all. The miraculous darkness of the Passion, lasting three hours,* was an event which *must* have attracted the notice of cotemporary naturalists, to say nothing of the other miracles of a more local nature. Has it so? I cannot more concisely or pointedly reply, than by again quoting the words of Gibbon:†

“How shall we excuse the supine inattention of the pagan and philosophic world to those evidences which were presented by the hand of Omnipotence, not to their reason but their senses? During the age of Christ, of his apostles, and of their disciples, the doctrine which they preached was confirmed by innumerable prodigies. The lame walked; the blind saw; the sick were healed; the dead were raised; demons were expelled; and the laws of nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the church. But the sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle; and, pursuing the ordinary avocations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alterations in the moral or physical government of the world. Under the reign of Tiberius, the whole earth,‡ or at least a celebrated province of the Roman empire,§ was involved in a preternatural darkness of three hours. Even this miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, the curiosity, or the devotion, of mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and history.|| It happened *during the life-time* of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the earliest intelligence, of the prodigy. *Each of these philosophers, in a laboured work, has recorded all the great phenomena of nature, earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses, which his indefati-*

* Matthew, chap. xxvii., ver. 45. † *Decline and Fall*, i. 451-2.

‡ The fathers, as they are drawn out in battle array by Dom Calmet (*Dissertations sur la Bible*, tom. iii., pp. 295—308) seem to cover the whole earth with darkness, in which they are followed by most of the moderns.

§ *Origen ad Matth.*, cap. xxvii., and a few modern critics, Beza, Le Clerc, Lardner, &c., are desirous of thus confining it to the land of Judea.

|| The celebrated passage of Phlegon is now wisely abandoned.

gable curiosity could collect.* Both the one and the other *have omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which the moral eye has been witness since the creation of the globe.* A distinct chapter of Pliny† is designed for eclipses of an extraordinary nature and unusual duration; but he contents himself with describing the singular defect of light which followed the murder of Cæsar; when, during the greatest part of the year, the orb of the sun appeared pale and without splendour. This season of obscurity, which cannot surely be compared with the preternatural darkness of the Passion, had been already celebrated by most of the poets‡ and historians of that memorable age.§

If our readers, after the perusal of such facts, can still believe in St. Matthew, all I can say is, their faith is more readily satisfied than mine. It is worthy of remark, what a host of respectable authorities vouch for an acknowledged fable, the preternatural darkness following Cæsar's death; one of these, too, being cotemporary, and the others writing soon after the pretended appearance of a prodigy, than which a more public and notorious one can hardly be imagined.|| What becomes of your favourite argument, then, that marvellous events, if of a general or public character, cannot be falsely recorded by any respectable historian? You can hardly find names more universally respected for historical integrity than Josephus, Plutarch, and Appian; yet (however difficult it be to explain *how*,) they were either deceivers or deceived. If you had one half as much proof for a single public Bible miracle as these historians furnish of this pagan preternatural darkness, we should never hear the end of it.

But you will still insist that we have at least evidence of the existence of the gospel as authentic, about the year 180. We have Irenæus' word for it; but it is notorious that the ancient fathers quoted as sacred, not one but many writings now acknowledged on all hands to be forgeries. This is freely acknowledged by the great Christian champion Lardner,¶ and no one will venture to dispute it.

* *Seneca, Quæst. Natur.*, i. 1, 15; vi. 1; vii. 17: *Plin. Hist. Natur.*, i. 11.

† *Plin. Hist. Natur.*, ii. 30.

‡ *Virgil, Georgic* i. 466. *Tibullus*, lib. i. *Eleg.* v., ver. 75. *Ovid, Metamorph.* xv. 782. *Lucan. Pharsal.* i. 540, The last of these poets places this prodigy before the civil war.

§ See a public epistle of *M. Antony* in *Joseph. Antiquit.*, xlv. 12. *Plutarch in Cæsar*, p. 471. *Appian. Bell. Civil.*, lib. iv. *Dion Cassius*, lib. xiv., p. 431. *Julius Obsequens*, cap. 128. This little treatise is an abstract of *Livy's* prodigies.

|| Mark Antony was Cæsar's cotemporary, and Josephus wrote about one hundred years after Antony's death. Plutarch wrote about one hundred and fifty years after Cæsar's death. Appian, whose history is in very high repute, flourished about one hundred and seventy years after Cæsar.

¶ See his *Credibility of the Gospels*, ii., pp. 109, 383, 423, 431, 500, 505, 508, 521. Dr. Middleton, in his *Free Enquiry*, furnishes proof of the same at pages 33, 34.

The very earliest catalogue of the books bound up in our present New Testament, was made public about the year 350, by St. Athanasius,* one of the sons of the "Babylon of the Apocalypse," who can get canonized for deception in the service of their church;" and the Catholic Council of Laodicea (or of Nice,) first officially declared them to be the New Testament, about the same time. For more than three centuries, then, after Christ's death, our New Testament did not exist as a book; our New Testament scriptures floated about, during all that time, uncollected, unstamped with the episcopal seal of canonization, and accepted or rejected according to the fancy or private predilections of the pious; aided, perhaps, by the quotations from, or opinions of, the early fathers; those forgers by their own concession, who "used falsehood as a medicine, and for the benefit of those who required to be deceived."

I deny, then, that you have adduced, or can adduce, any historical evidence whatever, to prove that the gospels were written by the men whose names they bear; or to prove *when* they were written; or to prove that they existed, in their present form, until a century and a half after Christ's death;† or to prove that the New Testament was compiled for more than three centuries after the Christian era.

I assert (and I put it to our readers whether I have not most amply substantiated the assertion,) that you have not proved—that you cannot prove—by a single historical record, the authenticity of the Christian revelation.

In conclusion, I have to notice Watson's argument deduced from the rapid spread of Christianity.

First, I remark on the flagrant extravagance of the Christian accounts of that spread. Justin has the assurance to assert: "*There is not a nation, Greek or barbarian or of any other name, even of those who wander in tribes and live in tents, among whom prayers are not offered up in the name of the crucified Jesus!*" Watson ought to have been ashamed to quote a historian, who, thus measuring his belief by his wishes, pens so outrageous an untruth regarding the spread of Christianity in a single century after its founder's death. But suppose the extravagance had actually been true. It would have proved that Christianity had actually lost ground in the last seventeen hundred years; for we know that such an assertion is not true of the world at the present day. Or suppose Watson's inference correct, that three hundred years after Christ, when Constantine was converted, a great majority of *one hundred and twenty millions* of people were Christians. At the present day, there are about *one hundred and fifty millions*; if the increase was so immense in *three hundred years*, what think you of its subsequent increase in *fifteen hundred*?

Watson, perceiving that the same argument will apply to Ma-

* *Lardner's Cred.*, vol. viii., p. 223.

† And even for this the evidence is of the most equivocal character.

hometanism, denies that the cases are parallel; seeing that Mahometanism was disseminated by force, and that its acceptance is urged by worldly motives. I deny, that, on this account, the parallel may be discarded. How was it that Mahomet so rapidly established the religion of Islam? By the sword, says Watson. And how did Constantine establish that of Christ? By gentleness, by toleration? Let us see. In the year 312 it was, that the Christian emperor issued his famous edict against heretics.* "After a preamble filled with passion and reproach," says Gibbon, "Constantine absolutely prohibits the assemblies of the heretics, and confiscates their public property, to the use either of the revenue or of the Catholic church. The design of extirpating the name, or at least of restraining the progress, of these odious heretics was prosecuted with vigour and effect. Some of the penal regulations were copied from the edict of Diocletian; and this method of conversion was applauded by the same bishops who had felt the hand of oppression and had pleaded the right of humanity."†

Well may Mosheim, more candid than Watson, tell us: "The zeal and diligence with which Constantine and his successors exerted themselves in the cause of Christianity, and in extending the limits of the church, prevent our surprise at the number of barbarous and uncivilized nations which received the gospel."‡ It certainly prevents *my* surprise; imperial edicts have always been very cogent and successful arguments.

But, at least, Watson will argue, there were no mercenary inducements to embrace Christianity. No? What says the pious Mosheim on this subject. Read the confessions which truth wrings from the venerable historian of the church. Speaking of the morals of Christians in the fourth century,§ he says:—

"When we cast an eye towards the lives and morals of Christians at this time, we find, as formerly, a mixture of good and evil; some eminent for their piety, some infamous for their crimes.

* *Eusebius in Vit. Constantin.*, lib. iii., cap. lxiii., lxiv., lxv., lxvi.

† *Decline and Fall*, vol. ii., chap. xxi.

‡ *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. i., p. 274.

§ The same century, by the way, in which the books of the New Testament were first declared canonical. If the council that so declared them shared the common character of the age, it was composed of bishops "who exhibited to their flocks the contagious example of arrogance, luxury, effeminacy, animosity, strife, with other vices too numerous to mention." Not a very trustworthy assemblage, I think.

But we have something more positive than mere inference, touching the character of the celebrated council to which the scriptural volume owes, if not its birth, at least its certificate of legitimacy. Sozomen confesses (*Soz. Eccles. Hist.*, lib. i., cap. xxvii.,) that many of the bishops came to the council to negotiate their own private affairs, and to obtain redress of grievances, by accusing other bishops who had injured them. Jones (in his own *Church History*) informs us, that Constantine, on receiving from the bishops a large packet of complaints, relative to their private quarrels, threw the whole into the fire, declaring that he would not presume to decide between such holy men.

The number, however, of immoral and unworthy Christians began so to increase, that the examples of real piety and virtue became extremely rare. When the terrors of persecution were totally dispelled; when the church, secured from the efforts of its enemies, enjoyed the sweets of prosperity and peace; when most of the bishops exhibited to their flocks the contagious examples of arrogance, luxury, effeminacy, animosities, and strife, with other vices too numerous to mention; when the inferior rulers or doctors fell into a slothful and opprobrious negligence of the duties of their respective stations, and employed, in vain wranglings and idle disputes, that zeal and attention that were due to the culture of piety and to the instruction of their people; and when (to complete the enormity of this horrid detail) *multitudes were drawn into the profession of Christianity, not by the power of conviction and argument, but by the prospect of gain and the fear of punishment*; then it was, indeed, no wonder that the church was contaminated by shoals of profligate Christians; and that the virtuous few were, in a manner, oppressed and overwhelmed with the superior numbers of the wicked and licentious.*

Indeed, the principle of compelling conversion by force—the same for which Christians cry out against Mahometanism—was openly defended and approved by the Christians of this century. “The monstrous error,” says Mosheim, “was almost universally adopted in this fourth century, *that errors in religion, when maintained and adhered to with proper admonition, were punishable with civil penalties and corporal tortures.*”†

What more could Mussulmen do than this? They resorted, you will say, to wholesale slaughter by the sword. And have not Christians done so? Hear the admission which Mosheim is again compelled to make:—

“Had the Saracens been infected with the same odious spirit of persecution that possessed the Crusaders, *there would not, perhaps, have remained a single Christian in that part of the world (Asia).* But though these infidels were chargeable with various crimes, and had frequently treated the Christians in a rigorous and injurious manner, yet they looked with horror on those scenes of persecution which the Latins exhibited as the exploits of heroic

Eusebius admits that some came to the council with worldly views of gain; (*Theod. Eccles. Hist.*, lib. iii., cap. vii., xi.;) and Theodoret honestly adds, that others were subtle and crafty, of a quarrelsome, malicious temper, and actuated by a spirit of revenge. Eusebius further confesses, (*Vit. Const.*, lib. iii., cap. xlii.,) that when they met in council, they immediately began wrangling, and could not be appeased or brought to temper, till Constantine interposed, artfully persuading some, shaming others into silence, and highly commending those who spoke agreeably to his sentiments.

And then they decided for Christendom what was to constitute its holy book! And Christendom—acquiescing, easy-tempered Christendom—scrupled not to receive it!

* *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. i., p. 311.

† *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 310.

piety, and considered it as the highest and most atrocious mark of cruelty and injustice, *to force unhappy men, by fire and sword, to abandon their religious principles, or to put them to death merely because they refused to change their opinions.*"*

What inducements more mercenary, what arguments more brutal than these, has the religion of Islam ever been accused of employing? I deny, then, that the parallel between Christianity (after the three first centuries) and Mahometanism, is, in the least degree, unfair; and if the rapid spread of the one prove the godhead of the Nazarine reformer, far more does the yet more rapid dissemination of the other bear testimony to the divine mission of the Arabian Messiah. Christianity had by six hundred years,† the start of Islamism: and if the two religions are to be judged by the success they have had,‡ we cannot for a moment hesitate to accord the palm to the Koran, and to exclaim: "Allah is the only God, and Mahomet is his prophet!"

But the test is altogether fallacious. It too often happens, that just in proportion to the assurance and extravagance of the impostor is his success with a credulous multitude.

I may yet, however, be asked how we should explain the singular phenomenon of Christianity's success for the first three hundred years. I may be required to say what, if not divine aid, first, (ere it was fostered by kings, or aided by tortures,) rooted the new religion in the hostile soil of paganism. I reply, as a cotemporary writer, in the following beautiful passage, replied to a similar question:—

"What hath preserved the Jew pure and entire in his faith, in his blood, in ceremony and feature, through ages of time, and while lost and scattered amidst nations opposed in every custom, law, feeling, and creed? Why hath he stood a noble monument of patient endurance, conscientious pertinacity, and scrupulous fidelity, long-suffering, and uncomplaining, yet unyielding resistance? Why, like a column in the desert, wearing its capital and its tracery, and all the form and ornament stamped by the genius of forgotten artists and forgotten nations, stands he, to this hour, a wondrous relic of empire departed, and grandeur overthrown? Why, but because of *persecution*?"§

And now, having replied at far greater length than I intended

* *Eccles. Hist.*, vol. iii., pp. 11, 12.

† The *Hegira*, the era of Mahomet's flight, whence Mussulmen compute their time, corresponds with the 16th July, 622.

‡ Before the death of Mahomet, his religion was established over all Arabia; yet he was but an obscure individual, despised and ridiculed by the chief men of Mecca. If sudden and unlooked-for success, springing from apparently inadequate causes, be evidence of the immediate hand of God, then was God's hand visible in the marvellous growth of the prophet of Mecca's power, civil and religious. "If we divide the known countries of the earth into thirty equal parts, five of them are Christian, six Mahometan, and nineteen pagan"—*Baule's Dictionary*.

§ Frances Wright's Lectures, pp. 142, 143.

to the general arguments broached in your last letter, I must not take up our readers' time by retorting your concluding squib regarding the supineness of "infidel missionaries," who, you think, ought to go forth as Christians do, to seek proselytes among the heathen. I doubt not that you would have little objection to see the ground cleared, and to have things all your own way; but methinks we have enough to do for the present, at home; and if orthodox testimony be admitted in proof, we have not been idle or unsuccessful.* When there are no ecclesiastical encroachments to resist, no attempts on liberty of conscience to repel, no orthodox graspings after power to expose, no Sabbath-mail petitioners to watch, and no Christian party in politics to grapple with, then will it be time enough to bid sceptics leave their sentinel-posts in this republic, on a mission to distant lands. If that day should ever arrive, I trust the apostles of knowledge will not, like those of faith, engraft the dogmas of orthodoxy on the superstitions of barbarism, or superadd the vices and intolerance of pseudo-civilisation to the rude ignorance of savage life.

ROBERT DALE OWEN.

TO ROBERT DALE OWEN.

LETTER X.

New-York, October 15, 1831.

SIR,

I admit that it is *as* difficult to decide what is a "supernatural" prophecy, as to decide what is a miracle; but I admit no difficulty at all in either case. To say that a drunkard's life will be short, requires no prophet; but to tell who will *become* drunkards, would be quite a different matter. But *suppose* real and false predictions and miracles to be so near alike as to render it difficult to distinguish between them, why then should sceptics consider the Bible marvels incredible?

It is true that *some* of the prophecies of the Bible are uttered in obscure, not to say ambiguous language; but then there are others of its prophecies that are expressed with such precision, that there is no chance to misunderstand them. Before proceeding, however, to adduce examples, I will notice those objected to by my opponent.

* The New-York Spectator, some time since, gave it "as a decided opinion, after close observation," that we of the Free Enquirer had done more in scattering the seeds of infidelity, as it is called, over the land "than all those great engines of moral power, under the control of our public societies, have accomplished of good." I think our cotemporary exaggerates the matter.

The first is the passage in Isaiah which says, that a virgin shall be with child, chap. vii., ver. 14. That this passage was understood by the Jews to designate the Messiah, is evident from the fact, that Matthew applies it to Jesus, as evidence of his Messiahship. "But," asks my opponent, "were Pekah and Rezin killed before Christ knew how to refuse the evil and choose the good?" To be sure they were. Does he suppose those kings lived to the time of Christ? I meddle not here with the question of his divinity; for Trinitarians believe, that, *as a man*, he had a beginning, and *increased in wisdom* as well as in stature. But suppose some obscurity rests on this prediction, what avails this against clear predictions? That Virgil has a prediction similar to this one in Isaiah, does not indeed prove him a prophet, but only a prophetic plagiarist. Isaiah's prediction, as well as the other predictions of the Old Testament, had long been translated into Greek, and sent into general circulation, ere Virgil lived; and he must evidently have read the same. Hence his "virgin," his "heavenly progeny," and his "golden age." And hence the general expectation among the nations, that an extraordinary character was to appear, at the very period of our Saviour's birth.

The next prophetic passage to which he objects, is that in Mark, relative to the signs which were to follow believers. On this point it may be remarked, that it is not said *how long* these signs were to follow them. If then they followed at all, the prediction was fulfilled. So that Ethan Allen, in making this objection, showed himself to be as little of a divine, as of a sincere sceptic. With regard to the proof of his inconsistent conduct on the occasion of his daughter's death, my opponent wants better evidence than that of the New-York Observer. But by what authority does he presume to impeach the veracity of that paper? Moreover, he should remember, that his *doubting* its word does not *disprove* it. Here then is proof positive. But suppose I were to produce additional evidence, he might just as well keep on doubting then. Nevertheless, he will find this same additional evidence, by just reading the anecdote again; even the name of the individual who was present on the occasion in question.—As respects Washington, I have to remark, in addition to what I have already adduced, that in his Memoirs, published by the American Sunday-School Union, is the testimony of an individual, that he was in the habit of retiring from camp, for private devotion; that, when on his farm, it was his custom on Sunday evenings to read the Bible and sermons to his family; and that he would sometimes sit, as if forgetful that he was not alone, and would raise his hand and move his lips silently. In a letter of the late Hon. Bushrod Washington, published in that biography, he gives his testimony to the *Christian* character of his illustrious relative. But the following letter from the rector of a church in Alexandria, in answer to one written by my request by Rev. Dr. Milnor of this city, *ought* to set the question for ever at rest;

and it *will* do it in the minds of all who are not disposed to cavil.

Alexandria, October 18, 1831.

Reverend and Dear Sir,

Although you have not heard from me again, as I promised, I have not been unmindful of the subject of your first letter. Owing to sickness in one branch of the Washington family, and the absence from home of another, it has not been in my power to obtain precisely such documents as I hoped to procure. Indeed, the private papers of General Washington are in the hands of the Rev. Jared Sparks, who is using them to enable him to draw up the life of the general. Such information as it has been in my power to obtain relative to his Christian principles, &c., I will now give, and if more should hereafter come into my hands, it shall be forwarded without delay. That he was a professed Christian, is affirmed by every branch of the family. And the universal impression, both among his relatives and others, is, that he was a communicant; but I find no one who ever communed with him. His nephew, Major L. Lewis, says that he well remembers leaving the general and his wife in church when the Lord's supper was to be administered, and that then none remained in the church here during that time but communicants. That he was a friend and supporter of religion, will appear from the enclosed extract from the records of the vestry of Christ Church, Fairfax parish, which I thought you would prefer to have, rather than a copy, on account of its being properly attested by the rector.*

Major Lewis says, that such was the interest which his uncle took in the erection of Pohick Church, near Mount Vernon, that he personally surveyed the whole parish, that it might be conveniently located. His own name was put on his pew door. In this parish, there was no minister during the latter part of his life, which together with the nature of his sickness, accounts for no clergyman being with him at the time of his last illness.

There is sufficient reason to believe, that he was regular in his devotional habits. Rev. E. M'Guire says, that once holding an argument with Major George Lewis (who, if I mistake not, commanded the body guard) on the subject of Christianity, he inquired from him what were the views of General W. on the subject. "O!" he answered, "General W. was a Christian," and in proof said, that he used to pray—and mentioned having heard him at prayer in his room when he went to carry despatches to him.† Mr. ———— acted when a youth as the

* The document here referred to, is an engagement by those who signed it, that their pews should be taxed five pounds each, annually and for ever, for the support of the clergyman that might officiate in the church, provided there were no tax laid by law. The name of Washington heads the list.

† My opponent may say, that this was no proof of his Christianity; but he will never make the public believe this, till he can shew that avowed sceptics

general's private secretary. Observing that he retired usually at a certain hour for a considerable time, his juvenile curiosity prompted to ascertain for what purpose—and he stated that he saw his uncle on his knees at a small stand, with the Bible open before him. This anecdote is well known.

General W. in his will makes the following demise: "To the Reverend, now Baron Lord Fairfax, I give a large Bible in three volumes, with notes, presented to me by the Rt. Rev. Thomas Wilson, Bishop of Sodor and Man."

With affectionate regard,

Your friend and brother,

REV. J. MILNOR, D.D.

WM. JACKSON,

The within statement I am happy to say is correct.

LAWRENCE LEWIS.

The attempt, sir, to prove Washington a sceptic, wants terms to express its infatuation and folly. Suppose he did not on his death-bed call for a clergyman or a Bible. We have just seen why he did not call for a clergyman; and as to a Bible, in the memoirs of him quoted a little back it is stated, that, when his spirit had fled, his wife knelt by his bed-side, with her head resting on the Bible; which shows that a Bible was there. But his "protestations" in the dying hour *do* show that religion afforded him aid. However, he said but very little at that time on any subject, it being with extreme difficulty that he could speak at all, on account of his quincy, as Marshall in his life of him asserts. The parallel drawn by my opponent between Washington and Elias Hicks, will not hold good. It is well known that the latter used the terms religion, revelation, &c., in a sense different from that of the episcopal church; but Washington being connected with that church, could not have used them in a different sense without deceiving; and by the term revelation, that church means the Scriptures. But why this introduction of Elias Hicks? He *professed* to be a *Christian*; and if he perverted and corrupted the truth, he was not an infidel, but a heretic. What then has his case to do towards proving Washington a sceptic? As to Jefferson's note, he does not pretend to have been himself the author of the statement therein contained. Gouverneur Morris is alone responsible, and he only for a conjecture—and that, too, contrary to the whole life of Washington. With regard to Franklin, he himself shows, that though in his youth he was sceptical, yet that in his riper years he condemned his scepticism. Why does my opponent overlook this? I do not say that he was

are in the habit of secret prayer. However, this, as we see, is not the only evidence in this letter of Washington's Christianity. The testimony of his nephew, Major Lewis, is tantamount to saying, that he was a communicant; and there is the testimony of the Washington family, that he was a professed Christian. Besides, it will be recollected, that I have already produced direct evidence from Hosack's Life of Clinton, of his having been a communicant.

religious; but I say he was a believer in the Bible. There are many that believe in that who do not pretend to personal piety; it is hence easy to account for the manner in which he replied to Whitfield, who by the way was no methodist preacher, but an episcopal clergyman. Franklin's letter to Thomas Paine is well known. He speaks of the injurious effects which Paine's writings were calculated to produce, and, taking him on his own ground, puts to him this question: "If mankind are so bad *with* religion, what would they be *without* it?" Does this look like scepticism? And to represent that philosopher as jesting with death and the resurrection, is anything but honouring him. To jest with such things, would betray the most shocking insensibility even in an infidel, much more in a Franklin. My remark relative to the scepticism of John Adams in his dotage, was not incongruous with what I observed in relation to the youthful scepticism of Franklin. There is a long period between youth and extreme old age, during which the judgment is more sound than in either of the other periods.

It will be recollected that I have heretofore forborne all positiveness respecting the religious character of John Adams, not having had before me at the time any documents to justify unqualified assertions on that point. I have at length received a document from his late place of residence, which precludes all further controversy, and settles the question most auspiciously for the cause of revelation. This document is in answer to a letter of mine in relation to the subject, from Rev. Mr. Whitney, pastor of the church of which Mr. Adams was a member. It will further be seen, that Samuel Adams and John Hancock were both professors of religion. Here follows the letter.

Quincy, September 19, 1831.

Sir,

I have received a letter from you expressing a desire to know distinctly, whether John Adams, our second president, was not a member of a congregational church at the period of our revolution; whether he was ever understood to have become an infidel before his death; and whether he was not a member of the congregational church in Quincy at the period of his death. Mr. Adams, sir, was admitted a member of the congregational church in Quincy several years before the American Revolution, and continued an exemplary member of it to the day of his death. Not a suspicion was entertained by any one in this part of our country, that he had become an infidel. Mr. Adams was unquestionably one of the most thoroughly established believers in the divine mission of Jesus Christ, and the truth of his religion. He had not only critically examined the evidences on the side of Christianity, but he had read almost all the deistical writers: and the result of his examination was, a deep conviction of the truth of our holy religion. His belief was the result of profound inquiry; and but few among the clergy were so thoroughly ac-

quainted with the science of religion, both natural and revealed. Mr. Adams was an unfailing attendant upon the public services of the Christian Sabbath, and at the celebration of the Lord's supper, till the infirmities of his very advanced age prevented. Sir, he was an eminent Christian; and his life and conversation were in general an illustrious example of the benign influence of a well established faith in the truth of the gospel on the human character and prospects. He lived and died a Christian believer; and nothing would have given him greater pain, than to have had his faith in the gospel called in question. The solution you have given of the declaration of Mr. Adams, as quoted by Owen from the Memoirs of Jefferson, is undoubtedly the true one. It related to those controversies which were conducted with any thing but the Christian temper.

In answer to your inquiry, whether Samuel Adams and John Hancock were not members of congregational churches, particularly in the days of the revolution, I can say they were. I am informed by ex-President Adams, to whom I showed your letter, that they were; that they were both *religious* men; unshaken believers in the religion of Jesus Christ, and constant attendants upon its ordinances. The assertion of the infidel Owen in relation to the characters he has claimed in your letter, as supporters of his dark and hopeless system, I am persuaded are wholly unfounded, and will obtain no credit among serious and enlightened minds.

I am, sir, very respectfully yours,

PETER WHITNEY.

MR. ORIGEN BACHELER.

Well, sir, we now see "what were the leaders in the American revolution." We see "what was John Adams, whose eloquence probably decided the birth-day of our republic." We see what were Samuel Adams and John Hancock, the two patriots who formed the very van of the immortal band, and who were alone proscribed by George III., when pardon was offered to all others. Alas! poor scepticism, thou must be content with Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine, the latter of whom became so besotted and filthy before his death, as to be shunned by decent people! Welcome, O scepticism, thrice welcome art thou to him. And verily 'tis no honour to Jefferson to be found in such company.—After having taken the foregoing view of the character of our revolutionary patriots, how superlatively nonsensical appears the following extract from my opponent's seventh letter: "If the French revolution was infidel throughout, far more the American. If scepticism is to be abused for the ultimate failure of the one, let her at least have credit for the glorious success of the other." This is truly laughable. Could the man have refrained from smiling while penning this sentence? But, in his last, he tells us he knows not what the private opinions of those "sturdy patriots" were. Indeed! and yet venture to pronounce three quarters of them sceptics! Yet, to crown all, he charges them with a direct

violation of the law of the New Testament! He ought, however, to recollect, that they had quite as good a right to explain that book for themselves, as he has to explain it for them. They undoubtedly believed, that a command to an *individual* in his *private* capacity to *obey* the laws of his country, was very far from being a command to a *nation* not to *change* its laws, or, it may be, its law-makers. They conceived there was a wide difference between an *individual breaking a law without an eye to revolution*, but merely as a *disorderly citizen*; and a *people rising in their majesty to shake off a foreign or a domestic yoke, by changing the government itself*. Surely, 'tis a strange confounding of things, to rank revolutionary patriots with bullies and mobocrats.

My remark touching my nativity was not gratuitous. I had been charged with being an apologist of legitimacy. I considered the charge as applied with an ill grace by one bred in a monarchy, to a native of this land of freedom. I therefore quoted Washington, and spake of my being "*born in a land of liberty*," as did he when addressing the French ambassador. I argued, that as I was born here, it was *natural* that I should prefer a republic to a monarchy. All my feelings, views, and prejudices, would of course be in favour of a republic. Under these circumstances, to be partly denominated an apologist of legitimacy, by one who not long since was a *subject* of his *Britannic majesty*, seemed to me to require a few words on my own part. As to his incompetency to judge of our distinguished men, I argued *that*, first, from his being a comparative stranger here, and, secondly, from his having never read their lives. But to resume the subject of prophecy.

The next prediction which he notices, is that relating to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the world. This prediction contains internal evidence of having been written in the days of the apostles. "*This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.*" *My opponent* has likewise introduced Gibbon, showing that the primitive Christians understood it to mean, that the world would come to an end during that generation—a clear proof of the existence of the gospels in the days of the apostles and before the destruction of Jerusalem. As an additional evidence of the same, we learn from history, that, on the approach of the Roman armies to the siege of Jerusalem, the Christians fled from the city, in obedience to the injunction, "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." Let the candid reader examine this prophecy, as given by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and then compare it with the account of the destruction of Jerusalem as given by Josephus, who was a *Jewish* historian, and he cannot fail to be surprised at its striking accomplishment. So plainly was it fulfilled, that Voltaire declared it must have been written after the event. Now it is evident, that the individual who could thus predict was a prophet; and if so, it is not supposable that he would make a mis-

take, and fix the date of *any* prediction *wrong*. By attending closely to the subject, it will be seen, that he treated of two events; the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the world. Now suppose *we* were engaged in conversation, and had two subjects on hand at once, we should of course sometimes allude to the one of them, and sometimes to the other, digressing and resuming as the case might be. For example, suppose we were conversing on the subject of the next presidential election and the one following it, touching now on this, now on that. Say we were calculating the chances of both elections. We might perhaps suppose it to be doubtful, in consequence of the number of candidates now before the people, whether any one would receive a majority over all the rest at the next election. Then speaking of the election after that, we might suppose, that, by the withdrawal of some of the candidates from the field, and the union of two or more of the political parties, an election might be effected. Next we might recur to the approaching election, and make our calculations as to the candidate whom congress might elect, in case there should be no choice by the people. But, not satisfied with any of our speculations on these subjects, we might exclaim, Well, a year or two will show all about these things. At the same time, we should have no manner of reference to the election after the next, although we should have been talking of it during the course of our conversation. Thus when Christ said, "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled," there is no necessity for understanding him as referring to all he had said on both of the subjects on which he had been alternately treating. But, sir, these very difficulties, and all others in the Bible, are in our favour, showing that they were not forged, and that they have not been altered since they were first written, to make them plainer.

Having attended to the cases of prophecy adduced by my opponent, it is proper that I now take my turn, and adduce some to suit myself.

It will not be disputed, that the Old Testament was written long before the Christian era. This is all that is necessary to be established, so far as relates to its prophecies.

The predictions relative to the Saviour are so numerous, and have been so clearly fulfilled, that it is but for a candid sceptic to examine them, to doubt no longer. Let him just peruse the following passages, and compare them with the history of Christ as given in the New Testament. Isaiah, chap. ix., ver. 6, 7; chap. xi., ver. 1 to 4. Jeremiah, chap. xxiii., ver. 5, 6; chap. xxxiii., ver. 15, 16. Daniel, chap. vii., ver. 13, 14. Genesis, chap. xlix., ver. 10. Daniel, chap. ix., ver. 24, 25, 26, 27. (In a theological debate holden in the seventeenth century, between a Jew and a Christian, in Venice, the presiding rabbi was so struck with the argument deduced by the Christian from this passage in Daniel, that he put an end to the debate by saying,

"Let us shut up our Bibles; for if we proceed in the examination of this prophecy, it will make us all become Christians.") Isaiah, chap. vii., ver. 14. Micah, chap. v., ver. 2. Isaiah, chap. xxxv., ver. 3, 5, 6; chap. liii., ver. 2, 3. Psalm ii., ver. 1, 2; xxii., ver. 6, 7. Zechariah, chap. xi., ver. 12, 13; chap. ix., ver. 9. Psalm xli., ver. 9; lv., ver. 20, 21; lix., ver. 21; xxxiv., ver. 20; xxii., ver. 16. Zechariah, chap. xii., ver. 10. Psalm xxii., ver. 18. Isaiah, chap. liii. (Let the sceptic read this chapter with the greatest attention, for it overthrew the scepticism of a Rochester.) Psalm xvi., ver. 10, 11; xxiv., ver. 7; lxviii., ver. 18; ii., ver. 18; lii., ver. 7 to 11. Isaiah, chap. ii.; chap. xi.; chap. lx.; and chap. lxi.

Now let the sceptic ask himself seriously, if it is reasonable to believe, that so many coincidences should occur in the case of one individual by chance. Those who understand mathematics, know that it would be impossible. Nor could those prophecies have been fulfilled by connivance; for many of them were fulfilled by the Jews, who were doing all they could to crush Christianity. That the Christians admitted the heathen miracles, is not an offset to the admission of the Christian miracles by the heathen; because the miracles of Christ were open to general observation, and were of a kind in which there could have been no deception, and which could have been performed only by divine power; and, in addition to this, they were of a kind calculated to destroy the devil's kingdom.

The next prophecy which I would adduce, relates to the dispersion of the Jews. There are many predictions of this event in the Old Testament, the most remarkable of which is contained in the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, which the reader is earnestly solicited to peruse, and compare with the actual dispersion of the Jews, and their history since that event.

The next case of prophecy which I would bring into view, is contained in the second chapter of Daniel. It consists of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, with its interpretation by Daniel. Whoever will read this prophecy with attention, and compare it with its accomplishment as exhibited in the history of the four universal monarchies, and the prevalence of the Christian religion, must, if candid, acknowledge it to have been from God.

Daniel's vision of the four beasts (chap. vii.) was the same in substance as the foregoing dream. This vision and its interpretation occupy the whole chapter, and cannot be read with too great attention. His vision of the ram and he-goat, is another wonderful prediction. With its interpretation, it occupies the whole of chap. viii. The reader will find it well worth his while to peruse it. So clear was it to Alexander, on its being shown to him, that he did not hesitate to apply that part to himself which relates to the overthrow of Persia by a Grecian king. There is another remarkable prophecy relating to Alexander, Daniel, chap. xi., ver. 2, 3.

One prediction more must suffice on this subject, viz., that relating to the destruction of Babylon, as contained in Isaiah chap. xiii., ver. 19 to 21; chap. xiv., ver. 22, 23; and Jeremiah, chap. l., ver. 23, 26, 39, 40; chap. li., ver. 25, 26, 29, 37, 41, 43. Compare these passages with the account given by various travellers, of the utter desolation of Babylon; and then doubt no more. Seriously, what can sceptics say to prophecies like the foregoing? We *know* what they *do* say. Thomas Paine supposed, that the writings of Daniel and Ezekiel were *enigmas*, relating to the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity! On the other hand, Porphyry and many others, perceiving that the prophecies of Daniel designated events too clearly to be thus evaded, declared that they must have been written *after* the events took place; thereby unwittingly adding the strongest possible testimony to the prophetic character of those writings, by showing them to be too plain to be misunderstood—so plain as by themselves to be deemed history rather than prophecy. Wonderful *enigmas* these! But with regard to the time in which Daniel lived and wrote, it is recorded not only in Jewish, but in Babylonian and Persian history. Even Thomas Paine did not deny the genuineness of the Book of Daniel.

Now, sir, I shall contend, that the Bible is not only probable, but certain. We *know* it to be true by *our own senses*. We see the Jews scattered abroad among all nations, and Christianity overspreading the world, and the kingdoms of the earth crumbling beneath it, and the Babylons and the Ninevehs and the Tyres of old in ruins, according to its prophetic declarations; and we do therefore *know*—yes, we do absolutely *know*, that it must be from God.

My opponent says, that the only mode of preserving the Jewish laws, was on plastered stones. How does he know this? Because he *hears* of no other mode. What! hear of no other mode, after all that is said in relation to writing on a plate of gold, Exodus, chap. xxxix., ver. 30; writing upon rods, Numbers, chap. xvii., ver. 2, 3; writing upon the posts of houses, and on gates, and binding the commandments for a sign upon their hands, &c., Deuteronomy, chap. vi., ver. 8, 9; chap. xi., ver. 18, 20; writing a bill of divorcement, Deuteronomy, chap. xxiv., ver. 1; the book of the wars of the Lord, Numbers, chap. xxi., ver. 14; copy of the law in a book, Deuteronomy, chap. xvii., ver. 18; chap. xxxi., ver. 24, 25, 26; written in a book, Exodus, chap. xvi., ver. 14? But the books just mentioned, and the parchment and the Egyptian papyrus heretofore mentioned; let us consider these. Varro says, that “at the time Alexander built Alexandria in Egypt,” (something like 330 years before Christ,) “the use of the papyrus for writing on was first found out in that country. The papyrus is a vegetable production; a kind of great bulrush, growing in the marshes of the Nile. It is a triangular stalk, fifteen feet high, and a foot and a half in circumference. When the outer coat is taken off, there are several other coats. These when separated made the

paper which the ancients used ; and it is from this, by a very natural transition, that the term paper is derived. Many other devices were used in former times, to contrive suitable materials for writing. Pliny tells us, book xiii., chap. xi., that "the most ancient way of writing was upon the leaves of the palm tree. Afterwards they made use of the inner bark of a tree for this purpose ; which inner bark being in Latin called *liber*, and in Greek *βιβλος* from hence a *book* hath ever since in the Latin tongue been called *liber*, and in the Greek *biblos*, because their books anciently consisted of leaves made of such inner barks." He likewise mentions another ancient mode of writing among the Greeks and Romans, viz., on tables of wood covered with wax, with a bodkin or *style* of iron, with which they engraved their letters on the wax. Hence the term *style* in writing. This mode was mostly made use of in writing letters ; hence the Latin *tabellæ*, tables. But on the invention of the Egyptian Papyrus for this use, all the other ways of writing were soon superseded, no material till then invented being more convenient to write upon than this. And therefore, when Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, undertook to establish a great library, and to gather all sorts of books into it, he caused them to be all copied out on this sort of paper. What now becomes of the assertion of the writer mentioned by my opponent, that the materials for writing any long work did not exist previous to the use of Egyptian papyrus?—and of his other assertion, that this papyrus was used five hundred years before Christ. As to parchment, Diodorus Siculus says, that the Persians of old wrote all their records on skins, which, when thus used, were at length, in the time of Eumenes, denominated parchment. Herodotus tells us of sheep-skins and goat-skins, made use of in writing by the ancient Ionians, many hundreds of years before the use of papyrus. Most of the ancient manuscripts that have descended to us, including those of the Old Testament, are written on parchment. These manuscripts of the Old Testament are the *rolled*, which are used in synagogues, and the *square*, which are used by private individuals. By this we may know how to understand Isaiah, chap. viii., ver. 1 ; Jeremiah, chap. xxxv., ver. 2 ; Ezekiel, chap. ii., ver. 9 ; and other similar passages. All the circumstances conspire to show, that parchment was in use among the Jews. But, as my opponent says, "this is not material ;" for we see they had something to write upon besides plastered stones, and that there were various materials for making books, before the invention of the Egyptian papyrus. But what does he mean by saying, that the "most durable method of registering the Jewish laws, would then, as well as now, be selected?" Do we select stones on which to register those or any other laws? Where then is the argument in this statement? And what becomes of the whole of this mighty objection to the genuineness of the Pentateuch?

He seems inclined to dispatch the Old Testament in a hurry. He may, however, first dispose of a few things ; the prophecies adduced in this letter, for example. He says its antiquity ex-

tends far beyond the limits of the *written* history of the Jewish books. This objection has just been examined and refuted. He says it countenances immorality. This bare assertion I shall offset by a bare denial. He talks of its unexampled cruelty. As well talk of the cruelty of the volcano and the hurricane. He reiterates against it his charge of obscenity. A fine charge indeed for *him* to make. He speaks of its unintelligible childishness. Just now as if he himself were so wise as to know what is proper for *Omniscience* to do or not to do, in the cases to which he alludes. These futile, these unfounded objections, he urges as reasons for rejecting the Old Testament by wholesale, against the stupendous prophecies adduced by me in this letter, and against the no less stupendous miracles which I am now about to adduce.

The Mosaic account of creation agrees both with natural and civil history. The geological appearances of the earth, its present semi-populated condition, the present state of knowledge and improvement, the concurrent voice of all authentic history and tradition, and the lack of any counter history or memorial, (upon which subjects I treated at some length in my letters on the divine existence,) demonstrate, that the world is but a few thousand years old. Besides this general evidence, universal tradition concurs with the Mosaic account, in the particulars of the creation. The *Chaldeans* had a tradition of a primordial watery chaos, a separation of the darkness from the light, and of the earth from heaven; the creation of man from the dust of the earth, and an infusion into him of divine reason. The *Phœnicians* represented the principle of the universe as a dark air, and a turbulent chaos. The *Persians* held, that God created the world at *six* different times. The *Hindoos* represented the universe as involved in darkness, when the sole, self-existing power, himself undiscerned, made the world discernible. With a thought he first created the waters, which are called *nara*, or the spirit of God; and since they were his first *ayana*, or place of motion, he is thence called *Narayana*, or moving on the waters. The *Chinese* in their ancient traditions say, the heavens were first formed; the foundations of the earth were next laid; the atmosphere was then diffused round the habitable globe; and, last of all, man was created. Our *Gothic ancestors* had a tradition of the formation of the world from chaos. The same tradition may be traced in the ancient Greek philosophy, and in the Greek and Latin poets. And when America was discovered, traditions were found to exist among the natives, bearing a very strong resemblance to the history of Moses, in this and other particulars. But not the least striking confirmation of the Bible account of creation, is the institution of the Sabbath, which custom has equally prevailed among the Hebrews, the Egyptians, the Chinese, the Hindoos, the Greeks, the Romans, and the northern barbarians; some of which nations were not so much as known to the Hebrews by name. Admitting that a mere division of time into weeks *might* obtain by means of the quartering of the moon, as was ingeniously, and, I believe, originally

contended on a late occasion in the Hall of Science by one of the speakers on the sceptical side,* still, this would be no reason why every seventh day should be observed as a day of rest, as it is observed; nor for the agreement of the aforesaid nations in the cause which they assign for this observance. The lack of the fictitious style in the Bible account of creation, is another evidence of its authenticity. And it is worthy of remark, that while a Voltaire objects to this account, as fixing the date of creation not sufficiently high, a Laplace objects, that it cannot be more than half as high as Moses makes it.

The fall of man is likewise confirmed in a similar manner. We find mankind to be actually depraved; and it is unreasonable to suppose, that a God of infinite purity originally created them so. But as a further confirmation, we have the testimony of the heathen world. Plato, Strabo, Ovid, Virgil, the Egyptian writers, and others, mention the state of innocence and the fall. Several particulars of the fall were received by the most ancient heathen. Many particulars relating to Adam and Eve, the forbidden tree, and the serpent, are to be found among the natives of Peru and the Philippine islands. The very name of Adam is known among the Indian Brachmans! The Hindoos have an ancient bas-relief of the *serpent Caliya*, vanquished by the *medial god Krishna*. Krishna is represented as pressed within the folds of the serpent, and then as triumphing over him, and *bruising his head beneath his feet!* The Edda, the record of the ancient Scythians, says the great serpent is an emanation from Loke, the evil principle, and gives a highly poetic description of his overthrow. A plain allusion is made to the sin of Eve, in the legend of Pandora, who was led by curiosity to open a casket given to her by Jupiter, out of which flew all the evil into the world, hope alone remaining at the bottom. Inherent, original sin, is not only acknowledged, but deplored, by many of the ancient heathen philosophers, poets, and moralists. And the universal prevalence of the custom of offering sacrifices for sin, attests at once to the truth of this sentiment, and to the rationality and credibility of the doctrine of the atonement.

The longevity assigned to the antediluvians, and the existence of giants, as mentioned in Genesis, are so improbable, in themselves considered, and so different from anything with which Moses was acquainted, that, had he merely forged his story, it is not to be supposed that he would have inserted anything of this nature, intending, as he did, that story for belief, even if we suppose he could have conceived of these things, which is doubtful. Then, again, we find him confirmed in these accounts by various heathen writers. All the ancient Greek and barbarian historians attest to this longevity. Similar traditions prevail among the Burmans of India beyond the Ganges, and among the Chinese. And the Greek and Latin poets sing of giants in the first ages of the world,

* Mr. Vale.

and their historians, as well as Josephus, speak of enormous bones seen in their times.

We come now to the consideration of that great and tremendous catastrophe of nature, the deluge. A story of this kind can be demonstrated to be true or false. If the whole earth was overwhelmed, traces of its submersion must remain: if not, there can be no such traces. And if all but one family were swept away, all the inhabitants of the globe, being their descendants, would undoubtedly hold some tradition to this effect; otherwise, not. Let us now see how stands this case in these respects.

Bones of horses and deer have been discovered on the Himalaya mountains, sixteen thousand feet above the level of the sea. They were obtained by the Chinese tartars, out of the masses of ice that fall with the avalanches, from the regions of eternal snow. Between the strata of various mountains, *marine* substances and *vegetable* productions repose together in mingled confusion. In some places, as at La Bolca, the marine productions of the four quarters of the globe are huddled promiscuously together, as by the rush of mighty waters. Almost all the table lands and gradual declivities of mountains are covered with deposits of loam and gravel called diluvium, such as subsiding floods deposit, as they gradually retire to their wonted beds. In this diluvium pebbles and loam are confusedly intermingled, totally unlike regularly formed strata, and just as rushing waters would have blended them together. This diluvium is to be seen over the face of the whole earth, even on the lofty mountains; and in it are intermingled the bones of various animals, thus proving incontestably that the deluge covered those mountains, and overspread the globe. Enormous masses of granite and other rocks are strewn on hills and in valleys, throughout the greater part of the northern hemisphere, which have been drifted over mountains, valleys, and seas, requiring for their removal thus, a force and body of water which nought but a general inundation could have furnished. Valleys wide and deep, called valleys of denudation, exist in all parts of the world, which exhibit indubitable evidences of having been excavated by irresistible diluvial torrents. The vast valley of the Rhone, for example, has been excavated between the Jungfrau and Monte Rosa, and its disrupted excavations are strewn o'er the plains of Burgundy. Even the Baltic sea has evidently been scooped out in this manner. In numerous instances, mountains are torn asunder, leaving chasms of frightful depth. And as the reverse of this, stupendous granitic fragments of mountains in many places tower in awful majesty thousands of feet aloft, entirely insulated from other mountain masses in the same regions, and even in their immediate vicinity; thus showing, that the intermediate elevations which formerly must have connected them, have been swept away. Mount Cervin, an isolated pyramid of more than three thousand feet in height, situated on the most lofty ridge of the Alps, and likewise the Landserone, a mountain in the plains of Lusace, situated about two leagues from a chain

of mountains of its own kind, and rising like a sugar-loaf nearly a thousand feet, are striking examples of this kind. In many places, hills of a large size exhibit evidences of having been accumulated by the commotion of the waters, being composed of gravel, fragments of rock, vegetable substances, and even the bones of animals! On the other hand, vast valleys have been discovered, filled up with the rushing wreck of diluvial rubbish, beneath which have been discovered the beds of rivers, fields, and forests! Traces of mighty currents may be seen on the surface of many hills and valleys, in the masses of rock strewn along upon them; and on removing the surface, rakings appear upon the solid rocks beneath, which must have been occasioned by the drifting of these rocky fragments. In various parts of the world, immense boulder stones, containing thousands of cubic yards, disintegrated from their native mountains, lie spread o'er the far distant plains, whither they must have been rolled by the irresistible torrents of a subsiding inundation. There are numerous caverns strewn with animal bones of various kinds, imbedded in diluvium; whither it is evident those animals fled to avoid the rising flood, and there met their fate, being drowned by the torrent of intruding waters, and buried beneath the masses of its accompanying diluvium. Some of the mouths of those caverns are even choked up by these diluvial masses. Further evidences of the universality and sudden occurrence of the deluge, may be seen in the fact, that even the arctic regions are strewn with the relics of animal and vegetable productions which now exist in the temperate and torrid zones alone; thereby demonstrating, that the climate of the antediluvian world in high polar latitudes, must have been much more mild than at present, and that a refrigerating change, like that which a universal saturation of the globe with water, and a diminution of the surface of the land (which at that time evidently happened) might be expected to occasion, has actually taken place. So sudden was this catastrophe and its consequent change of climate, that undecayed carcasses of elephants have been found infixed in the everlasting ices of Siberia—and numerous fossilised vegetables, in their various stages of growth, remain to attest, with their countless leaves and branches and stalks, the fearful visitation of the destroying cataclysm.

Examine we now the testimony of history and tradition on this subject. Berosus, the Chaldean historian, who wrote at Babylon in the time of Alexander, relates an account of the flood, and mentions the preservation of *Nochus*, or Noah, in an ark or chest, by being carried to the summit of the Armenian mountains. Abydenus, an ancient Assyrian historian, says the deluge was foretold: that the ark was driven into Armenia; and that the birds were thrice sent forth to see if the earth were dry. Alexander Polyhistor, another ancient historian, says, that in the reign of Xisuthrus was the great deluge; that Saturn predicted it to him, and directed him to build an ark, and, together with the fowls and creeping things, to sail in it. Plato mentions the

rsal deluge, in which the cities were destroyed. Diodorus as us, that it was the tradition of the Egyptians, that most creatures perished in the deluge which happened in Deucalion's time. Ovid's description of Deucalion's flood corresponds the flood of Noah. Plutarch, in treating of the sagacity of birds, observes that a dove was sent out by Deucalion, which, on finding no rest, flying away, was a sign of the continuance of the deluge.

but afterwards, flying away, was a sign of fair weather. He calls the rainbow a sign or token to men. Lucian mentions the great deluge in Deucalion's time, and the ark which preserved the remnant of human kind. He says the flood was sent upon mankind for their wickedness; that the *present* race descended from Deucalion; that the earth gave forth abundance of corn; that great showers of rain descended; that the rivers increased and the sea swelled; that all things were water, and all perished, Deucalion and his family excepted, who built an ark for the purpose of preservation; and that, moved by divine will, to him came swine and horses, lions and serpents, and other creatures of the earth, in pairs, and were received into the ark.

The ancient Persians believed in a universal deluge. Similar traditions have prevailed among the Hindoos, Burmans, and Chinese, (the Chinese not only mentioning the deluge itself, but the ark,) and likewise among the Mexicans, the Peruvians, the Egyptians, the Nicaraguans, the Western Caledonians, the Otomians, the Sandwich Islanders, and the New Zealanders. The ark is further confirmed by a coin struck at Apamea in the time of the elder Philip, on which is represented a kind of square ark floating upon the waters, a man and woman going out of it by a ground, while two other persons remain within. Above it is a dove with an olive-branch, and another bird is perched on its roof. In one of the front panels of the chest is the word *ARK*, in ancient Greek characters. And lastly, there is at this day a village at the foot of Mount Ararat, bearing the name of *Place of Descent*!

As we have seen, that the deluge is as strongly proved as is possible for any event to be proved. No other event in all history is so well confirmed. To doubt it, is to doubt against all possible evidence. 'Tis the veriest trifling, to attempt to evade this case by saying of "many deluges," &c. Every one knows, that it is utterly impossible for the various nations and tribes of the earth to invent a story of this kind, each nation and tribe by itself, and have its details thus harmonize. Let sceptics try the experiment, and they would soon see this. Plato does indeed mention of various inundations celebrated by the Greeks; but, at the same time, he mentions the *great deluge*, in which the cities were destroyed. Nay, all accounts, all evidences, all circumstances concur to prove *one*, and *but one*, universal deluge; and, therefore, no man will not believe under such circumstances, *ought* to be proved.

The next striking event mentioned in the Old Testament, is the

building of Babel. This event is noticed by Berosus, Homer, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Lucian, and the Sybilline oracle, under the allegory of the attempt of the giants to scale heaven. Hestiaeus, Abydenus, and Eupolemus, likewise mention it. And the multitude of languages in the world, unaccountable on any natural principle, are so many witnesses of the confusion of tongues, in the manner related by Moses.

We have now reached the time of the dispersion of mankind, and have found the scripture account of events thus far corroborated by universal history and tradition. The only possible way of accounting for this, is that pointed out in the Bible, viz., that down to this time, the whole human family had kept in a body, and had received accounts from their ancestors of the great events that had transpired from the time of Adam downward, which they retained at their dispersion, and thus transmitted to their descendants, and they to theirs, and so on to the present day. Those traditions are indeed corrupted, as all oral transmissions during a lapse of many ages must necessarily become; but their great features are every where the same; thereby proving, *unansincerely* proving, that mankind descended from the same common source—and from *that source described in the Bible*.

But though the remaining scripture events cannot be expected to be universally attested, in consequence of the dispersion of mankind prior to their occurrence, still we find them amply corroborated, as will be seen by what follows.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is mentioned by Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Tacitus, Pliny, and Solinus, and is confirmed by the appearance of the Dead Sea. The history of Abraham and other patriarchs is given, in agreement with the Bible history, by Sanchoniathon and Trogus Pompeius, the latter of whom also gives Joseph's history. The Arabs claim their descent from Ishmael, the son of Hagar by Abraham. Various ancient historians mention Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph with respect, and agree with Moses in their accounts of them. Some of them relate the principal acts of Moses. Diodorus and Herodotus notice the plagues of Egypt. The departure of the Israelites from Egypt, and their miraculous passage through the Red Sea, are recorded by Berosus, Artapanus, Strabo, Diodorus Siculus, Numenius, Justin, and Tacitus. Artapanus and Diodorus give the particulars. Nor is the tradition of this event extinct to this day among the natives in the vicinity. The inhabitants of Corondel and its neighbourhood, on the eastern side of the Red Sea, still preserve the remembrance of the deliverance of the Israelites; and the Arabian geographers denominate this sea the "Sea of Kolzum," that is, the Sea of Destruction. The country in that vicinity confirms this part of the narrative of Moses. The Old Testament Etham is still denominated Etti; Shur, Sinai, and Paran continue to be known by their ancient names, as well as Marah, Elath, and Midian; and the grove of Elim with its twelve fountains remains to this very day! Nine distinguished heathen authors mention the ceremony of cir-

circumcision. Moses is universally recognised by heathen writers as a great lawgiver. Herodotus, who is denominated the father of profane history, says that the Egyptians had a tradition, that in very remote ages, the sun had four times departed from his regular course, having twice set where he ought to have risen, and twice risen where he ought to have set. The Chinese have a tradition, recorded in their ancient annals, that in the reign of their eighth monarch, *Yau*, the sun and moon stood still ten days. Who can read these surprising traditions, without being reminded of the Bible account of the stopping of the sun by Joshua, and its retrogression in the time of Hezekiah? The histories of David and Solomon are given at considerable length in the remains of the Phœnician annals, Damascenus' history, Eupolemus, and Dîus. Menander, the Ephesian historian, Alexander Polyhistor, and others, notice riddles, or hard questions, sent betwixt Solomon and Hiram. The Abyssinians claim the descent of their kings from Solomon, by the queen of Sheba. Eupolemus wrote a book on Elijah's miracles. Menander mentions the great drought in Elijah's time. Julian the Apostate admits there were inspired men among the Jews. Lycophron and Æneas Gazeus give the history of Jonah. Justin mentions Hazael, king of Syria. Menander mentions Salmanazar, who carried captive the ten tribes, and this captivity is further confirmed by certain sculptures on the mountains of Be-Sitoun, near the confines of ancient Assyria. Berosus and Herodotus relate the expeditions of Sennacherib, king of Assyria; and Herodotus relates the destruction of his great army. The war of Pharaoh-Necho against the Jews and Babylonians, testified by Herodotus, and is further and most strikingly confirmed by the recent discovery of a sculptured group by M. Bezoni, in the tomb of Psammis, the son of Pharaoh-Necho. The Babylonian captivity, and the restoration of the Jews from the captivity, are too prominent in history to need particular reference for confirmation. And here ends the Old Testament history.

The New Testament is verified in a manner still stronger and more striking, as might be expected from its being less ancient. Here, the testimony of *Jews* as well as pagans is to be considered. Josephus and various heathen writers speak of Herod, Archelaus, Pontius Pilate, and other persons mentioned by the New Testament. Dion, in his life of Octavius Cæsar, mentions the murder of the babes of Bethlehem; and Macrobius, an early heathen historian, says that Herod ordered to be slain some children that were under two years of age, among whom was his own son. Josephus says Herod appointed Archelaus to succeed him. The passage ascribed to Josephus relative to Christ I shall not insist upon, having no need of it, although I do not concede that it is spurious. But if Josephus did not in reality notice so distinguished a character, who was mentioned by Pontius Pilate and the Roman historians, and deified by Tiberius Cæsar, and who was the founder of a new religion, he was in that particular a very partial and unfaithful historian. The same may be said relative to his not

mentioning the Christian sect. The Jewish Talmud, however, is very far from being silent on these points. It refers to Christ's nativity, mentions his journey into Egypt, and admits that he performed many miracles, which it attributes to magic and the ineffable name, stolen by him, as *that* says, from the Temple. It calls him Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary, the daughter of Eli, whose son he was without the knowledge of her husband. It acknowledges that two false witnesses were suborned to swear against him, and states that he was crucified on the evening of the passover. It mentions several of his disciples, viz., Matthew, James, Thaddeus, and Nicodemus, the latter of whom it denominates a very great, good, and pious ruler. It admits that the disciples of Jesus had the power of working miracles, and gives two instances not named in the Bible. Pontius Pilate, as it would seem from the appeals of primitive Christians to his acts, transmitted to Rome an account of the Saviour's miracles, death, and resurrection. This account was deposited among the archives of the empire. And hence, the primitive Christians, in their controversies with the Gentiles, appealed to it. Such was the effect which this account produced on Tiberius, that he proposed to the senate, that Christ should be enrolled among the Roman gods, and threatened punishment to the accusers of the Christians. The famous Tacitus says, "the author of that (sect or) name was Christus, who in the reign of Tiberius was punished with death, as a criminal, by the procurator, Pontius Pilate. The younger Pliny, in his letter to Trajan, says, that Jesus was worshipped by his followers as a God. Celsus, a bitter enemy of Christianity, who wrote in the latter part of the second century, mentions the principal facts recorded in the gospel relative to Christ, and declares that he copied the account from the writings of the companions and disciples of Jesus, under the names which they now bear. He admits that Christ was considered a divine person by his disciples, and that he actually performed miracles, which, however, he attributes to magic. Porphyry, another distinguished opponent of Christianity, who lived about a century after Celsus, attests the genuineness of the New Testament. He admitted Christ to be a pious person, and, likewise, that he was conveyed into heaven. Julian the Apostate, about the middle of the fourth century, admits the genuineness of the four gospels, and the reality of the miracles of Christ. He could produce *no* counter evidence in refutation of the truth of these things. And even Mahomet acknowledges the authority of the gospels, the messiahship of Christ, his miracles, his prophecies, &c., &c. Thus much for the New Testament.

Here, sir, is my Bible, with its history, its miracles, and its prophecies, compiled from the annals of the human race, and confirmed by monumental memorials the world over. No other book is thus sustained by external evidence. It is therefore not for want of evidence that sceptics reject it, but because they do not properly examine that evidence, or else do not wish to believe it,

account of its fearful and eternal retributions. In either case are inexcusable. Confirmed as are the Bible facts, it is but little consequence to ascertain its *authors*. What matters it whether we know the name of an individual who says that Napoleon was a great military genius? As to its other evidences, it is in common with other authentic books. That there should be a history of the Jews and Christians, is to be expected. Old and New Testaments are received as those histories, just as the history of the Romans and the Mahometan religion is received as theirs; and there is no counter-history. Then, again, the Bible has every internal mark imaginable of being authentic, as any authentic history has. And as to its internal evidence coming from heaven, suffice it to say, that it contains doctrines which are universally admitted to be infinitely superior to the highest conceptions of the wisest heathen philosophers; which doctrines alone are able to overthrow the cruelties and abominations of the pagan world, and moralise mankind. Such doctrines, sustained, as we have seen them to be, by well-substantiated prophecies and miracles, can leave no doubt on the candid mind of their divine origin. But there is another species of evidence still, and yet another, which prove the genuineness of the Bible in a manner in which that of no other book *can* be proved. It has been easily read to the people—the Old Testament to the Jews, and New to the Christians—ever since it was written; so that it has become a matter of far greater notoriety than any other book. Again, there have been numerous sects and schisms, in consequence of which its doctrines have been the subjects of discussion, thereby giving it still greater notoriety. And lastly, it has been continuously opposed by bitter enemies, which has caused it to pass the most rigid scrutiny—and that too in early times, when, if ever, it could be disproved. So that, all things considered, *no book in the world has one tenth part of the evidence of its own genuineness and authenticity which the Bible has.* Besides, the memorials of Jesus Christ, in the existence of a religious sect, and in the institutions of the Christian Sabbath, baptism, and the Lord's supper. They too preserve their ancient memorials. Lo! evidences once more thicken, and I find myself at a loss where to end! The yoke of the Jews are burthensome, and they could never have been imposed on them in the first instance, without the clearest evidence of their divine authority. The first propagators of Christianity could have had no possible motive to spread their religion, if it had not been true, exposed as they were to every temporal suffering. And they were not sufferers for mere opinion's sake: *such* suffering proves only the *sincerity* of the sufferer. But they suffered for what they declared they *knew themselves*. They suffered in spreading the best religion the world ever saw, infidels themselves being judges. They sacrificed even their lives to fit mankind—with the prospect of an eternal hell before their eyes—for their imposture, unless they knew what they affirmed to be true. *Men do not act thus.* Human nature never was so. Nor

could they have made converts as they did, unaided by supernatural power. It is not supposable, that Jews and pagans would relinquish their established religions at every sacrifice, and hazard and embrace a religion that was not fully sustained by satisfactory evidence. And what would be such evidence? Not the mere assertions of Christians. There were plenty of assertions on the other side. No, nothing but supernatural evidence could have convinced them. So that every converted pagan and Jew in the first ages of Christianity are illustrious evidences of its divine original.

Had Roman catholics been the sole keepers of the New Testament for a thousand years, as my opponent asserts, this would have been a clear proof of its uncorrupted preservation, containing, as that does, many things which utterly condemn many of their ceremonies. But it is not true, that they have had its sole keeping even for a moment. The Greek church have never recognised the authority of the pope, and are as independent of catholics as catholics are of them. This church has always had the New Testament, as well as the catholics. And besides this, there have all along been more or less dissenters from the catholics, who have likewise had it. And there have been heretical sects from the very first, who have had it. Let my opponent then retract this assertion, and the argument founded on it.

His authority for the Florentine miracle I have examined, and found wanting. The time in which it is pretended to have been performed is not specified; the historians who recorded it are not named; and the whole has the air of fiction throughout. Thus we perceive, that it stands on ground very different from that of the miracles of the Bible. As to the Athanasian miracle, I find no notice of it in any work which treats on the miracles adduced by our opponents to disprove the miracles of the Bible. This shows, that it is either an obscure or an exploded case, or else, that it is an acknowledged miracle, and not to their purpose to urge. The catholics had the exclusive keeping of certain documents during the dark ages, and how many interpolations they may have foisted into them, we know not. Let it be proved, that the works of Victor, the dialogue of Eneas, the edict of Justinian, the history of Procopius, the chronicle of Marcellinus, and the record of Gregory, have all been in the hands of all parties ever since they were written, just as the books of the New Testament have been, and I will admit the miracle; for if there have been no interpolations, 'twould be absurd to question it. Still, if this could be shown, and the miracle proved, it would not "seduce" me into the catholic church; for at the time it is said to have been performed, that church was unknown. Popery is of a more recent date. *Then*, transubstantiation, image-worship, and the invocation of saints, had not been introduced, nor the blasphemous authority and prerogatives of the pope acknowledged. But this Athanasian miracle appears on investigation to be unsustained by historical fact. In the first place, the emperor Zeno did not live in the fourth century.

but near the close of the fifth, commencing his reign in 491. In the next place, notwithstanding Mosheim gives a very full list of profane authors, he does not even name any Eneas of Gaza, or of any other place, in the time of Zeno. He must therefore have been a fabled character, or a very obscure one. Nor does he mention Marcellinus. And it is unreasonable to suppose, that a notice of the miracle itself would have been omitted by this distinguished historian, as well as by other church historians, had it been a matter of notoriety. Therefore, until we have better evidence, it will not be worth the while to pay any more attention to this case.

My argument, that it is not to be supposed that a good God would permit the devil to mislead sincere seekers after truth by diabolical miracles, addresses itself to the reason of every man. But this was not the *only* one I used, to show the difference between divine and diabolical miracles.

The modern cases of a supernatural kind, which in my last I promised to produce, here follow :

Rev. Wm. Tennent, (an extraordinary circumstance in relation to whom I produced in our discussion on the divine existence,) was pastor of the presbyterian church in Freehold, N. J., and died in 1777. He was distinguished for eminent piety and devotion. During an illness of his, he apparently died, and lay entranced three days; and as the people were on the point of celebrating his funeral obsequies, he revived! On examination, he was found to be totally ignorant of all the previous events of his life, and had even lost the ability to read! But his recollection was afterwards restored. The following is his account of what he realized during the time of his apparent death.

"While I was conversing with my brother," said he, "on the state of my soul, and the fears I had entertained for my future welfare, I found myself, in an instant, in another state of existence, under the direction of a superior being, who ordered me to follow him. I was accordingly wafted along, I know not how, till I beheld at a distance an ineffable glory, the impression of which on my mind it is impossible to communicate to mortal man. I immediately reflected on my happy change, and thought—Well, blessed be God! I am safe at last, notwithstanding all my fears. I saw an innumerable host of happy beings, surrounding the inexpressible glory, in acts of adoration and joyous worship; but I did not see any bodily shape or representation in the glorious appearance. I heard things unutterable. I heard their songs and hallelujahs of thanksgiving and praise with unspeakable rapture. I felt joy unutterable and full of glory. I then applied to my conductor, and requested leave to join the happy throng; on which he tapped me on the shoulder, and said, 'You must return to the earth.' This seemed like a sword through my heart. In an instant I recollected to have seen my brother standing before me, disputing with the doctor. The three days during which I had appeared *lifeless* seemed to me not more than ten or twenty mi-

notes. The idea of returning to this world of sorrow and trouble gave me such a shock, that I fainted repeatedly." He added, "Such was the effect on my mind of what I had seen and heard, that if it be possible for a human being to live entirely above the world and the things of it, for some time afterward I was that person. The ravishing sounds of the songs and hallelujahs that I heard, and the very words that were uttered, were not out of my ears, when awake, for at least three years. All the kingdoms of the earth were in my sight as nothing and vanity; and so great were my ideas of heavenly glory, that nothing which did not in some measure relate to it, could command my serious attention."

At one time in his life, he was falsely prosecuted, and had no witnesses at hand by which his innocence could be substantiated. Nevertheless his confidence in God remained unshaken; and when all his friends were ready to despond, he alone kept up courage. As the court for his trial were about to convene, he took a little walk; but he had not proceeded far before he met a man and his wife, who stopped him, and asked if his name was not Tennent. He answered in the affirmative, and begged to know if they had any business with him. The man replied, "You best know." He told his name, and said that he was from a certain place (which he mentioned) in Pennsylvania or Maryland; that some nights before they left home, he and his wife waked out of a sound sleep, and each told the other a dream which had just occurred, and which proved to be the same in substance—to wit, that he, Mr. Tennent, was at Trenton, in the greatest possible distress, and that it was in their power, and theirs only, to relieve him. Considering it as a remarkable dream only, they again went to sleep, and it was twice repeated precisely in the same manner, to both of them. This made so deep an impression on their minds, that they set off, and here they were, and would know of him what they were to do. Mr. Tennent immediately went with them to the court-house, and his counsel, on examining the man and his wife, and finding their testimony to be full to the purpose, were, as they well might be, in perfect astonishment. Before the trial began, another person, of a low character, called on Mr. Tennent, and told him that he was so harrassed in conscience, for the part he had been acting in this prosecution, that he could get no rest till he had determined to come and make a full confession. He sent this man to his counsel also. Soon after, Mr. Stockton from Princeton appeared, and added his testimony. In short, they went to trial, and, notwithstanding the utmost exertions of the ablest counsel, who had been employed to aid the attorney-general against Mr. Tennent, the advocates on his side satisfied the jury so perfectly on the subject, that they did not hesitate honourably to acquit him, by their unanimous verdict of *not guilty*, to the great confusion and mortification of his numerous opposers.

Thomas Chalkley was a worthy and highly-esteemed travelling

preacher among the friends. In his journal are recorded the following events. The first occurred at sea. It relates to a young physician that was on board. It is as follows.—

"About this Time our Doctor dreamed a Dream, which was to this Effect, himself relating it to me: He said, He dreamed that he went on Shore at a great and spacious Town, the Buildings whereof were high, and the Streets broad; and as he went up the Street, he saw a large Sign, on which was written in great golden Letters SHAME. At the Door of the House (to which the Sign belonged) stood a Woman with a Cann in her Hand, who said unto him, *Doctor, will you drink?* He replied, with all my Heart, I have not drank any Thing but Water a great while (our Wine and Cider being all spent, having had a long Passage) and he drank a hearty Draught, which, he said, made him merry; so he went up the Street reeling to and fro, when a grim Fellow coming behind him, clapp'd him on the Shoulder, and told him, *That he arrested him in the Name of the Governour of the place.* He asked him for what, and said, What have I done? He answered, *for stealing the Woman's Cann*; the Cann he had indeed, and so he was had before the Governour, which was a mighty Black Dog, the biggest and grimest that ever he saw in his Life; and Witness was brought in against him by an old Companion of his, and he was found guilty, and his Sentence was, to go to Prison, and there to lay for ever.

"He told me this dream so punctually, and with such an Emphasis, that it affected me with serious Sadness, and caused my Heart to move within me (for to me the Dream seemed true, and the Interpretation sure.) I then told him he was an ingenious Man, and might clearly see the Interpretation of that Dream, which exactly answered to his State and Condition, which I thus interpreted to him: 'This great and spacious Place, wherein the Buildings were high and the Streets broad, is thy great and high Profession: The Sign, on which was wrote *Shame*, which thou sawest, and the Woman at the Door, with the Cann in her Hand, truly represents that great, crying, and shameful Sin of Drunkenness, which thou knows to be thy great Weakness, which the Woman with the Cann did truly represent to thee: The grim Fellow which arrested thee in the Devil's Territories is *Death*, who will assuredly arrest all Mortals: The Governor which thou sawest, representing a great black Dog, is certainly the *Devil*, who, after his Servants have served him to the full, will torment them eternally in Hell.' So he got up as it were in haste, and said, *God forbid! It is nothing but a Dream.* But I told him it was a very significant One, and a Warning to him from the Almighty, who sometimes speaks to Men in Dreams.

"Now about this Time (being some Days after the Doctor's Dream) a grievous Accident happened to us. We meeting with a Dutch Vessel in Lime-bay a little above the Start, hailed her, and she us. They said they came from Lisbon, and were bound for Holland. She was loaded with Wine, Brandy, Fruit, and such-

like Commodities; and we having little but Water to drink, (by reason our Passage was longer than we expected,) therefore we sent our Boat on board, in order to buy us a little Wine to drink with our Water. Our Doctor, and a Merchant that was a Passenger, and one Sailor, went on board, where they staid so long until some of them were overcome with Wine, although they were desired to beware thereof; so that when they came back, a Rope being handed to them, they being filled with Wine unto Excess, were not capable of using it dexterously, insomuch that they overset the Boat, and she turned Bottom upward, having the Doctor under her. The Merchant caught hold of a Rope called the Main Sheet, whereby his Life was saved. The Sailor not getting so much Drink as the other two, got nimbly on the Bottom of the Boat, and floated on the Water till such Time as our other Boat was hoisted out, which was done with great Speed, and we took him in; but the Doctor was drowned before the Boat came. The Seaman that sat upon the Boat saw him sink, but could not help him. This was the greatest Exercise that we met with in all our Voyage; and much the more so, as the Doctor was of an evil Life and Conversation, and much given to Excess of Drinking. When he got on board the aforesaid Ship, the Master sent for a Cann of Wine, and said, *Doctor, will you Drink?* He replied, *Yes, with all my Heart, for I've drank no Wine a great while.* Upon which he drank a hearty Draught, that made him merry, (as he said in his Dream;) and notwithstanding the Admonition which was so clearly manifested to him but three Days before, and the many Promises he had made to Almighty God, some of which I was a Witness of, when strong Convictions were upon him, yet now he was unhappily overcome, and in Drink when he was drowned."

The next case which he relates is as follows:—

"I was at the Burial of our Friend, *Jonathan Dickinson*, at which we had a very large Meeting; he was a Man generally well beloved by his Friends and Neighbours. In this Meeting a Passage (he had often told me in his Health) was brought to my Remembrance, I think worthy to be recorded to the End of Time, which is as follows: It happened at *Port-Royal*, in *Jamaica*, that two young Men were at Dinner with *Jonathan*, and diverse other People of Account in the World, and they were speaking about Earthquakes (there having been one in that Place formerly, which was very dreadful, having destroyed many Houses and Families.) These two young Men argued that Earthquakes, and all other Things came by Nature, and denied a supernatural Power or Deity; insomuch that diverse, surprised at such wicked Discourse, and being ashamed of their Company, left it; and at the same Time the Earth shook, and trembled exceedingly, as though astonished at such Treason against its Sovereign and Creator, whose Footstool it is: And when the Earth thus moved, the Company which remained were so astonished, that some run one Way, and some another, but these two atheistical young Men staid in the

Room, and *Jonathan* with them, he believing that the Providence of Almighty God could preserve him there if he pleased, and if not, that it was in vain to fly; but the Hand of God smote these two young Men, so that they fell down; and, as *Jonathan* told me, he laid one on a Bed, and the other on a Couch, and they never spoke more, but died soon after. This was the amazing End of these young Men: A dreadful Example to all Atheists, and dissolute and wicked Livers."

John Huss, who suffered martyrdom in 1415, told the people at his death, that out of the ashes of the goose, (which is the signification of Huss in the Bohemian language,) God would raise up, in Germany, a hundred years after, a swan, whose singing would affright all those vultures (meaning the popish clergy). This was exactly fulfilled in Luther (signifying swan) a hundred years after.

An individual of my acquaintance in this city, is preparing to lay before the public a pamphlet containing a number of remarkable cases of the foregoing kind. He has kindly permitted me to extract the two following for insertion in this discussion, before the appearance of his pamphlet. Here follow the extracts in his own words.

"I knew a combination formed for the express purpose of destroying Christianity more than fifty years since; and they accomplished nothing but their own destruction. Their objects were, to oppose civil and religious government, and to recreate themselves as their propensities and appetites should dictate. Those who composed this association were my neighbours, and many of them my school-mates. I knew them well both before and after they formed their association. I marked their conduct, and saw and knew their end. They consisted of about twenty or more males, besides females. After the formation of this association, I knew a man of the society of friends, of the county of Dutchess, in the state of New-York, by the name of Daniel Haviland, who attended a religious meeting at which I was present. He rose in the meeting with trembling limbs, with tears rolling over his furrowed cheeks, and sprinkling upon the floor, and declared:—'I saw a vision of those who conspire against my master. Friends, keep from them! Keep your children from them! I saw the wild boar of the forest making inroads upon them, and every footstep marked with blood. I shall think strange if they do not die some bloody or unnatural death.' Six were shot, seven were hung, seven were drowned, two drank themselves to death, one was eaten by the hogs, another by the dogs, one committed suicide by stabbing himself, one fell from his horse and was killed by the fall, one was accidentally struck by an axe and bled to death. I have all their names, and can give all the particulars of their death."

"About the year 1780, one Benjamin Kelley, in my presence, cursed his father, and wished his damned eyes were torn out of his Head. I then saw his end. I saw him in my mind fall back-

ward, and the crows picking his eyes out. After these expressions to his father, he murdered a man by the name of Clark. He was waylaid by a number of boys, who were indignant on account of the murder of Clark, and shot off from his horse. He fell into the crotch of a tree, so as to throw his face upward, his feet touching the ground, and was not found and interred until after the crows had literally picked his eyes out of his head!"*

A clergyman of this city has several times related in his sermons, in my own hearing, an occurrence with which he was himself acquainted, the purport of which is as follows:—A female felt a heavy burthen on her spirit, in relation to the eternal well-being of one of her acquaintance. She betook herself to prayer in his behalf, in which she continued for a long time, without realizing an answer. But at length, about one o'clock at night, her burthened spirit felt relief, and she was given by faith to understand that her prayer was heard, and the subject thereof converted to God. She immediately repaired to her husband's room, and informed him that the individual under consideration had found the Lord precious to his soul. He asked her whom she had seen that had given her this information. "No one," replied she, "but God has revealed it to me." On inquiring the next day, it was ascertained, that that individual had indeed experienced the quickening energies of the Holy Spirit at the very hour of the preceding night specified by the female above mentioned.

My own grandsire was a baptist clergyman. I have repeatedly heard him relate a number of instances of a nature similar to the one last mentioned, as matters of *his own experience*. I will give one as a specimen, which is in substance as follows:—After having one night retired to rest, he felt a powerful impression, that he must arise, and go to the house of a distant individual, to him designated. The reason for this he was not given to understand; but go he must. He arose and went, and, on his arrival, found an individual there in great agony of soul for sin. He cried to the Lord in that individual's behalf. The Lord heard his cry and sent relief; and, if my memory serves, a powerful revival of religion followed.

Lastly. *I have myself experienced many things of a similar nature.* It was the *miraculous* effusion of the Holy Ghost upon me, that gave me faith in Christ, and annihilated in me the last lingering vestiges of infidelity, against which I had for weeks been struggling in seeking after truth. And it has pleased God to show me a vision, which at some future day I may perhaps be directed to make known. Many other things could I relate *from my own knowledge*, equally wonderful with any thing which I have given in the preceding examples.

The foregoing are but a small part of the well-authenticated cases of the kind which I could give. And there are some indi-

* "The eye that mocketh at his father, and refuseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it," Proverbs, chap. xxx., ver. 17.

viduals whom God has favoured with extraordinary exercises, who nevertheless refrain from giving the same publicity, through the dread of being denominated visionaries and enthusiasts; and thus does the cause of truth lack the support which it ought to receive from them. But a poor return is this for the distinguished favour which they have received at the hand of God. Let them beware, lest the talent committed to them be taken from them, and given to others more faithful.

In addition to all the foregoing, every Christian,—that is, every regenerated individual,—experiences nothing less than a miracle in his regeneration. And every individual who believes in a God, does virtually believe in miracles, in believing in his providence.

The approbation of suicide by Pope, or Moore, or Addison, or even by an angel of light, would not make it the less infernal. Nevertheless, 'tis a strange construction of a *poet's personification* of a self-murderer, to make it an *approbation* of his deed. It will be no easy matter to persuade the public, that Addison approved of suicide, just because he *as a poet* put a soliloquy into the mouth of Cato. Nor does it appear, from any thing of this nature, that Pope and Moore approved of it; though, even if they did, Christianity has little concern with either of them. As to the old heathen philosophers, suicide is one of the very reasons I urged in their case to show their need of revelation. Why then are they introduced as a palliation of it? My opponent, however, denies that it is a feature of infidelity. Why then does he say, that it is *of course* to be expected, that I should *disapprove* of it? The fact is, Christianity does not sanction it. This is the reason why I should be expected to disapprove of it. The manner in which he disposes of the other cases, viz., infanticide and the murder of decrepid old people, is very far from being satisfactory. The case of the old people he does not notice at all. As to infants, he would, it seems, by his reference to "Moral Physiology," have parents *produce* no sickly ones: such as are so constituted as to be unable to give being to healthy offspring, he would have refrain from becoming parents. But suppose such ones should refrain, what mode would he propose in the cases of those who sometimes have healthy and sometimes sickly offspring? Must they wholly abstain? And then there is occasionally a *deformed* child. What is to be done in that case? And there are the deaf and the dumb and the blind, and idiots and maniacs. What shall be done with them? Moreover, suppose those parents whom he would keep childless, should not think proper to follow his advice in this respect; what should be done with *their* offspring? In a word, what would it be best to do with the world *as it is*? Here are sickly and deformed infants, idiots, maniacs, invalids, and decrepid old people; and such there are likely to continue to be, notwithstanding all the visionary projects of my opponent. The question therefore is, Is it proper to rid the community of these burthensome members as the heathen do? If not, then those heathen need revelation to enlighten them on these points; for science and philosophy have

never done this. My opponent must therefore defend *all* these murderous abominations of the heathen, or admit the necessity of revelation. He needs not think of evading the point by talking of "catch-questions," and "notorious irrelevancies," and by his laughable comparison of himself with the Saviour. These are no irrelevancies, no catch-questions; nor must they be evaded. Revelation is necessary, or else all the impurities, abominations, and murderous rites of paganism are right. And now let him remember to speak out definitely on *ALL* these points. Let him defend heathenism in *all its length and breadth*, or admit the necessity of revelation. But if *utility* is the test of right and wrong, most assuredly, *most assuredly*, would the ridding of society of all its burdensome, troublesome members, be right. Most assuredly would it be useful to dispatch, in some easy manner, sickly and deformed infants, idiots, maniacs, invalids, and decrepid old people. Nay, the principle followed out would go much further. It would lead to the stealing of property by the poor from the rich; to the commission of fornication and secret adultery, without which Hume and others contend the full advantages of life cannot be realized; to the extermination of every drunkard, and every other pernicious member of society; to the dispatching of individuals when in great pain of body, or trouble of mind; and to the extirpation of every sceptic and heretic by Christians, who consider them baneful members of society, and of every Christian by them, they considering Christians in the same light. Behold, then, this beautiful system of utilitarianism! Let us not be told, that the "cruel suffering, and the violation of the most amiable feelings," which such acts would occasion, would overbalance their utility. This is to condemn paganism, which did just this by infanticide, &c., and to admit the necessity of revelation. It is likewise to condemn suicide. As to the "cruel suffering" in many of these cases, an easy death would be a relief. And if man has no soul, why not as well kill a human being without "violence to amiable feeling," as to kill a beast? Nay, why would it not *gratify* amiable feeling, seeing the motive would be good, viz., to benefit society, and relieve wretchedness? Alas! in what a predicament is my opponent, when all *his* reasons against infanticide, &c., go to show, that the heathen "inflicted cruel suffering, and violated the most amiable of human feelings," and, therefore, that they greatly needed revelation. With regard to the cases of suicide, &c., by him adduced as the result of religious delirium, they furnish an argument in favour of Christianity, in that they show, that a believer in this religion does not commit it when in his right mind, but has in the first place to become delirious. But it is *consistent* for a *sceptic* to kill *himself* when in his *right* mind—that is, if any state of his mind can be said to be so. It will be said, that religion *drives some distracted*, in consequence of which they kill themselves. I do not admit this. 'Tis the want of religion which drives them distracted. They will not bow their stubborn necks to Jehovah in penitence; they will not submit to his requisitions; and hence

they are made fearful examples to others, to beware of their incorrigibility. But the abuse of a thing is no argument against its use. Were Christians coolly to sit down, like infidels and heathen philosophers, and plead the propriety and "utility" of suicide, religion might then be charged with causing it, with some appearance of truth. The remark of my opponent, that we have no right to delegate to others the right to take our lives, unless we have the right to do it ourselves, may be answered by observing, that *we* delegate no such right to others; it is a commandment of the *Author* of existence, that the life of a *murderer* shall be taken by his fellow-man. But this is no reason why a man should take his *own* life on account of *trouble*.

He speaks of the "scanty" proofs of the existence of Moses and Jesus, adduced by Watson and Leslie. Will he just inform us how *copious* are the proofs of the existence of Alexander the Great, or of Augustus Cæsar, or of any other individual named in history? But he is "*surprised*," he says, to find the proofs so scanty. So then it seems he had not examined the subject before, any more than Thomas Paine did the New Testament before he wrote against that. Perfectly in character for sceptics. Just what might be expected. I never knew a sceptic yet who *did* thoroughly examine the subject. Voltaire did not. Gibbon did not. Paine did not. And now it seems Mr. Owen has not.

He denominates the concluding paragraph of my last letter a squib. It is much easier to do this than to make the experiment which in that paragraph I recommended to sceptics. Let *them* undertake to spread Christianity among the heathen in the way in which *they* say it *was first* spread, and they will then see whether it could have been so spread or not. But, seriously, I would again press it upon them as a duty, to aid in ameliorating the condition of the heathen. If they do not approve of Christianity and Christian missions, let them fit out missions to their own liking. They might as well "clear" *part* of the "ground" as for Christians to clear it all; especially as they do not fail to occupy some of it after it is cleared. Nor have they more to do "at home" than Christians have. There are *infidel* as well as "ecclesiastical encroachments to resist;" *infidel* "attempts on liberty of conscience to repel;" *infidel* "graspings after power to expose;" *infidel* *opposers* of the "Sabbath-mail petitioners to watch;" and an *infidel* "party in politics to grapple with:"—notwithstanding all which, Christians contrive to spare some men for the benefit of the heathen. And if sceptics and heretics had one half the benevolence to which they pretend, they would spare some likewise, instead of exerting all their energies to stir up domestic discord, and to embitter one part of the community against another. And here let me suggest to them to *do something at home* for the promotion of the causes of which they profess to approve, (the Temperance and Magdalen causes for example,) instead of standing still and finding fault with the *manner* in which others are attempting to promote those causes.

I call once more for the passage which says that Moses wrote an account of his own death, and likewise for that which says that *the Bible* was lost and found. And I still demand, that that branch of modern knowledge be designated which proves witchcraft to be impossible.

I have already shown, that the wisest heathen sages were involved in gross spiritual darkness, and that they inculcated and practised gross immoralities. The sketch of their character by one of their own number, is all that I shall add to this particular. "The most notorious vices," says Quintilian, speaking of the philosophers of his time, "are screened under the name; and they do not labour to maintain the character of philosophers by virtue or study, but conceal the most vicious lives under an austere look, and singularity of dress."

I will next compliment *modern infidel philosophists* through one of *their* number. "These philosophers," says Rousseau, "are haughty, affirmative, and dogmatical; pretending to know every thing, and proving nothing; laughing at each other; and this common point appears to me to be the only one in which they are all right. Truth, they say, is never prejudicial to men: I believe so too; and this is, in my opinion, a great proof, that what they teach is not the truth. Were philosophers in a situation to discover truth, who among them would interest himself in its behalf? Each of them well knows that his system is not better founded than those of others; but he supports it because it is his. There is not one of them who, having found truth and falsehood, but would prefer the lie he had adopted, to truth discovered by another. Where is the philosopher who, for his own glory, would not deceive mankind? Avoid those who, under the pretence of explaining nature, sow desolating doctrines in the hearts of men; and whose apparent scepticism is a hundred times more affirmative and dogmatical than the decided tone of their adversaries. Moreover, by overturning, destroying, and treading under foot every thing respected by men, they deprive the afflicted of the last consolation of their misery, and take from the rich and powerful the only bridle of their passions; they snatch from the heart both the remorse of crime and the hope of virtue; and still boast of being the benefactors of mankind."

I will now draw a parallel between some of the most distinguished Christian and infidel philosophers.

SIR FRANCIS BACON was one of the greatest philosophers of any age. It was of him that Addison said, "He possessed at once all those extraordinary talents which were divided among the great authors of antiquity." And in showing that the wisest men in all ages have been believers in the Christian religion, he selects Bacon as a sample. He it was who first taught men to reason inductively, and therefore correctly. This great man declared, that the first principle of right reason is religion: and that, after all his studies and inquiries, he durst not die with any other thoughts than those of the Christian religion. "I had rather," says he, "believe

all the fables in the Legend, the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind. God never wrought a miracle to convert an atheist, because his ordinary works confute him. A thorough insight into philosophy makes a good believer, and a smattering in it naturally produces such a race of despicable infidels, as the little profligate writers of the present age, whom, I must confess, I have always accused to myself, not so much for their want of faith, as their want of learning."

HON. ROBERT BOYLE was a most eminent philosopher. Of him the celebrated Dr. Børhaave remarks, that from his works may be deduced the whole system of natural knowledge. This great man was as good as great, and pursued his philosophical studies with an eye to the promotion of the interests of religion. He wrote several valuable articles in defence of Christianity.

JOHN MILTON, the immortal bard of England, was possessed of immense genius and erudition. He could read in all the learned and polite languages. This great genius wrote in defence of Christianity; to which he was so devoted, that he not only made the Bible the rule of his conduct, but the guide of his genius.

JOHN LOCKE, Esq., immortalised by his philosophical works, was distinguished likewise as a champion of the Christian religion. Speaking of the Bible, he says, "Therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for the matter." "His name," says a celebrated writer, "will continue to be revered wherever learning, liberty, and virtue, shall be held in estimation." Queen Caroline placed his bust, together with those of Bacon, Newton, and Clark, in a pavilion erected by her in honour of philosophy, as being the four principal English philosophers.

SIR ISAAC NEWTON was one of the greatest geniuses that ever appeared on the stage of the world. Keil says, that if all philosophy and mathematics were considered as consisting of ten parts, nine of them are entirely of his discovery and invention. This wonderful man devoted himself to the study of the Scriptures, and wrote in their defence. Dr. Ryland says, "The character and practice of this great man, are more than sufficient to weigh down to eternity all the Bolingbrokes and Humes, the Rousseaus and Voltaires, that have ever lived, or ever will live, to the end of time. Let the modern free thinkers, or rather half thinkers, or no thinkers, hide their heads in confusion and darkness, instead of standing up with impudence against so great a master of reason and philosophy."

The foregoing is a list of *a few* of the great men who have espoused the cause of revelation. How utterly ridiculous, to hear pert striplings, with but a thousandth part of their learning or genius, talk of the ignorance and weakness of believers in the Bible.

Compare we now the foregoing individuals, with the principal *infidel* philosophers.

There was Lord Herbert, who taught that the indulgence of lust

and anger is no more to be blamed than the thirst occasioned by the dropsy. There was Hobbes, who taught that every man has a right to all things, and may lawfully get them if he can. There was Lord Bolingbroke, who advocated the gratification of the evil passions, condemned modesty, and pleaded for adultery. There was David Hume, who condemned the virtues and praised the vices, and who contended that adultery *must* be practised, if men would obtain all the advantages of life ! There was Voltaire, who advocated the unlimited gratification of the appetites. There was Rousseau, who made *feeling* his standard of morality. Almost all these men attacked Christianity under the guise of friendship. Collins, Shaftesbury, and others, qualified themselves for civil office by partaking of the Lord's supper, though they had not the least belief in Christianity. Rochester was grossly immoral. Woolston was an outrageous blasphemer. Morgan was a notorious liar. Voltaire was a hypocrite, a violator of confidence, a violator of truth, a tyrant, a profligate, and an adulterer. Doubtful of the existence of God, he professed to believe the Catholic religion. Engaged in attempting the overthrow of Christianity, he received the symbols of the body and blood of its author. As for Rousseau, he was a noted debauchee, and a perjured hypocrite. And Thomas Paine was a scurrilous calumniator, a filthy drunkard, and a dishonest man.

In view of the foregoing parallel, I would ask the candid reader which class of philosophers appear to have been under the guidance and influence of eternal truth.

Christianity has been opposed by formidable enemies from its very commencement to the present hour. All manner of objections have by them been urged, and have been considered by the world; and still this religion prevails. Their mightiest efforts have proved unavailing. From all its fiery trials, it has come forth like gold seven times tried. It stood the test of the most rigid scrutiny in its infancy, when, if ever, it could have been proved an imposture. Every discussion of its merits from that day to this, has served but to establish it the more firmly. Intellectuals of the highest order, after the most thorough examination, bow to the force of its evidence. Eighteen hundred years of opposition finds its divine authority acknowledged by the most enlightened nations, and its triumphs extending from sea to sea, and from the rivers to the ends of the earth. How preposterous, then, under all these circumstances, for sceptics in our day to dream of success against this religion ! What have they to urge which has not been urged again and again in vain ? And who among them can wield those old objections more efficiently than as a Gibbon, a Hume, and a Voltaire ? Yet Christianity has withstood their mightiest efforts, and come off triumphant. How preposterous, then, I repeat it, for any now to dream of its overthrow ! There are but two new measures left for them to adopt to accomplish their object, and these they would do well to try forthwith, and thus settle the question for ever : The one is, for them to say *what*

evidence is necessary to prove history as ancient as that of the Bible, and reject all such history as has not this evidence; the other, to invent a book of marvels, &c., like the Bible, and attempt to palm it upon mankind precisely in the way in which they say *the Bible* was palmed upon them. If, by the adoption of these measures, they leave any ancient history unexploded, and get the world to receive their book, they will then have shown that it is *possible* the Bible may be an imposture.

It remains, that I briefly recapitulate the leading arguments and evidences adduced during the discussion of this question, and thus leave the substance of the whole directly before the mind of the reader.

In support of the position, that revelation is necessary, I have shown that mankind, left to themselves, have uniformly fallen into the most cruel and abominable practices, their wisest philosophers not excepted; that what light they *have* possessed is but a reflection from the rays of the sun of patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian revelation; that infidels among ourselves derive their best ideas from the religion of the Bible, according to the admission of some of their own number; that the result of the only experiment ever made by a nation to discard the Bible, was the most disastrous and terrible; that from the foregoing considerations, there is reason to believe there would now be no knowledge of God on the face of the earth, yea, that the human race would have become extinct by violence, vice, and crime, had no revelation ever been made; and that it is unreasonable to suppose God would have made a world of rational beings, and left them in such a condition. Hence the reasonableness of supposing, that a revelation has been made. I have shown, by the admission of infidels themselves, that the Bible has by far the greatest apparent claim to be considered a revelation, of all other books besides. From the circumstance, that such men as Bacon, Newton, Locke, Milton, and others, have, after full investigation, been believers in the Bible, I have argued, that, whether true or false, it cannot be that *grossly* absurd, self-contradictory book which sceptics pretend. That its opposers are in general immoral men, I have urged as a reason for supposing that their opposition arises not from want of evidence in its behalf, but from their dislike of its fearful denunciations of vice; the more especially, as some of them renounce infidelity in the trying hour, and die in horror. This latter consideration I have urged as a reason for the thorough examination of the subject by others, inasmuch as men may well pause, before embracing a system which serves its authors so poorly in the time of need. I have brought into view the fact, that the Bible has every possible internal mark of genuineness, and not one of forgery. I have shown, that it is confirmed by the existing state of things, and by universal history and tradition; that its doctrines infinitely surpass all the discoveries of human reason; that it contains wonderful prophecies, uttered long before their accomplishment; and that it is the only means which prove effectual to the humanis-

ing and moralising of mankind. I have likewise proved, that God has not even now wholly forsaken the earth, but that he does, in certain instances, *miraculously* manifest himself to particular individuals; that genuine Christians *know* the truth of the experimental parts of the Bible by their own experience; and that a general providence is admitted by all who admit a God.

The foregoing positions I have, as I conceive, succeeded in establishing in the face of the most determined opposition on the part of my opponent; and if established under such circumstances, they may be expected to stand.

To me, the authenticity of the Bible appears a demonstration, merely from its evidences, to say nothing of my own experience. But suppose it not *certain* that it is true, still, does it not appear at least *probable*, after considering all the foregoing evidences? Nay, I will not rest the case here. I will take the widest scope which sceptics themselves can pretend to take. I ask them then, if they *know* the Bible to be *false*. No one will pretend this. Let me say then, that nothing short of certainty in this case renders it safe to reject it. Eternal damnation is the doom of those who disbelieve it, should it prove to be true. On the other hand, its *reception* can endanger no one, even should it be false. Men cannot therefore be too cautious in this matter, and examine the subject with too great attention. Let our readers then investigate this subject still further; for this discussion, after all, is but a mere *sketch* of a *part* of the evidences in the case; which, it is hoped, will serve to excite in them a spirit for still further inquiry. Let them peruse the voluminous works of Horne and others; and let them make haste to do this, for life is gliding rapidly away. Let them do it *prayerfully*, ardently desiring to be led in the right way. Those who will adopt this course may be assured, that it will result in their conviction of the authenticity of the Bible. Thus has it resulted in the case of others; thus has it resulted in my own. It was once my unhappy lot to be for a time a sceptic. But conceiving the question of the authenticity of the Bible to be all-important, I commenced a sober examination thereof. Divinely aided in my researches, it was not long ere my scepticism was given to the winds, and the Bible became my theme. This blessed volume is now more precious to me than gold, yea, than life itself. And if my efforts in this discussion should contribute in any degree to produce the same result in the case of others similarly situated, or to guard the unwary from being caught in the snare who are not already involved in its toils, it will be to me a matter of rejoicing in the dying hour, and, as I trust, to all eternity.

"Hail! holy volume! whose blest page
Instructs our youth, supports our age,
Beams through the shades of death's dark night,
And brings eternity to light.

"Despised, neglected, though thou art,
Where vice usurps the poisoned heart,

Though sceptics, dazzled with the ray
Of reason's glimmering twilight day,
Wildered in speculative maze,
In error lost, which clouds thy blaze,
Nor truth nor beauty in thee see,
Still thou art very dear to me.

"Say, thou who deem'st this book a lie,
If thou canst give one reason why,
If one fair reason can be shown,
Which reason would not blush to own.
Hast thou its various proofs survey'd,
And all its evidences weigh'd?
Go, dive the depths of ancient times,
The records search of various climes,
Whate'er may prove it false or true,
External or internal, view
With candour's bright impartial eye,
And think it, if thou canst, a lie.

"Thy reason, learning, wit, may look
Disdainful on this humble book;
But has thine eye with keener view
Than Newton's look'd creation through?
Or trac'd like Locke's the laws that bind
The subtle movements of the mind?
Is Milton's boundless learning thine,
Heir of antiquity's rich mine,
His stretch of thought, his fancy vast,
Creation's utmost bounds that past?
Have brighter beams from glory's sun
Been showered on thee than Washington?
Yet, these believed it, and rever'd
Those pages thou perhaps hast jeer'd.

"Blest book! may I with reverence due
Thy lucid leaves for ever view,
Each truth with awed attention scan
Which points the way of life to man."

ORIGEN BACHELER.

TO ORIGEN BACHELER.

LETTER X.

New-York, October 22, 1831.

Let us examine your illustrations of prophecy.
Isaiah's prediction, you think, must have applied to Jesus, because Matthew so applied it. This is one way of getting out of the difficulty. From a deist I might have expected such a solution that you offer regarding Christ not knowing how "to refuse the evil and choose the good" until after Pekah and Rezin's death, for the deist deems Christ a man. That the Son of God, equal with the Father, only learned to refuse the evil and choose the good about two thousand five hundred years ago, is an odd idea.

The Roman poets, I imagine, did not study the Old Testament; but suppose this vague belief in a promised Messiah was common through the Roman empire,* and did reach Virgil's ears, and win his belief, and dictate the lines in his *Bucolica*, what then? Have not prophecies fifty times brought about their own fulfilment? What so easy, if it was really expected that some one should be born of a virgin, as for Christ's biographers to declare that their master had been so? And so of all the other vaunted coincidences.

In addition to all this, it ought to be borne in mind, that the Jews, the original receivers and ancient interpreters of the Old Testament, declare, that the prophecies scattered throughout its pages by no means apply to Jesus. Daniel prophecies (they argue) that in the days of the Messiah, there should be only *one* kingdom and *one* king upon earth, the king Messiah: (chap ii.) Isaiah, too, (they contend,) declares there shall be *one* religion and *one* law throughout the world in the days of the Messiah. In Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, (they remind us,) it is stated, there shall then be no more sins or crimes upon earth; and in Isaiah, that there shall be times of universal peace, when not only men but beasts shall cease from molesting each other. Was this so? (they ask us:) is it so now? how then can we pretend that the Messiah is come? It is not for me to decide between the Jewish and the Christian interpretation of these prophecies; but the discordance between the two sufficiently testifies to the equivocal character of the prophecies themselves.

Your vision of Mark's prophecy I anticipated and have already replied to. I must be allowed to take the text as it stands, or not at all. Observe, too, that if we set about limiting the promise regarding supernatural powers to the apostolic age, there is not the shadow of a reason why we should not so also limit the threat: "he that believeth not shall be damned." If the one extend "even to the end of the world," so, in common consistency, must the other. Should the church ever recover its powers, then will I admit this text as evidence of Christianity. Till then I must believe, either that Mark deceives us, or that there is not one believer in Christendom—not one but will be damned.

Our readers will give to the Observer's story about Ethan Allen,†

* It seems by no means certain that the expectation was then general (except perhaps with certain sects) even among the Jews themselves. Josephus says the belief of a Messiah was a "vulgar error," and that it obtained credence among some of his nation, by their "building their expectation on but one ambiguous oracle or prophecy, found in their sacred books." (See *Lestrangle's Josephus*, folio, p. 971.) Tacitus confirms Josephus' statement. (*Hist.* lib. v., c. xiii.)

† It is to suppose both the Vermont Patriot and his daughter most irrational beings, to give credit to the alleged conversation. She asks him *how she should believe*, as if she had the power to believe this way or that, just at his bidding! And he also replies as if belief were a coat or a gown to be put on or off at a word. Let those believe the tale who can.

such weight as they conceive due to it. As a specimen how much dependance may be placed on these pious details, so pressingly urged and so assiduously circulated, I may quote the very sentence which immediately succeeds the passage you furnish from Weem's *Life of Washington*, as evidence of his death-bed piety :

"Feeling that the hour of his departure out of this world was at hand, he desired that every body would quit the room : they all went out, and, according to his wish, left him—with his God. Feeling that the silver cord of life is loosing, and that his spirit is ready to quit her old companion, the body, he extends himself on his bed—closes his eyes for the last time, with his own hands—folds his arms decently on his breast—then, breathing out, 'Father of mercies, take me to thyself'—he fell asleep."

Every child can perceive the impossibility, *after all had left the room*, of any biographer learning whether the father of his country breathed out these or any other dying words. Yet each petty embellishment like this, even to the incidental mentioning of a Bible (which you seem to think it impossible Mrs. Washington could have brought into the room herself) you receive as you would the Bible story itself; and on these you build up your proofs of Washington's orthodoxy. I have never called him a decided sceptic, nor believed him to have been such. I believe, and for this I have given abundant reasons already—that his religion was of the most liberal stamp. If additional testimony were wanting, Mr. Jackson's letter published by you amply supplies it. On the very spot where the patriot resided, it cannot even be ascertained that he was ever a communicant. In proof of his orthodoxy we have merely the vague opinions of certain individuals, the fact that he rented a pew, looked out a location for a church, and secretly prayed. I need not surely repeat, that this is no proof at all of any thing more than deism; and that the lack of further evidence, so assiduously sought after, is, of itself, presumptive proof of Washington's heterodoxy; especially when added to the undenied and undeniable *fact* adduced by Jefferson, that Washington, in replying to the clergy's address, *evaded expressing any belief in Christianity*, and that he *never did say a word on the subject* in any of his public papers except his valedictory letter to the governors of the states, where he speaks of "the benign influence of the Christian religion."

The scepticism of Jefferson, of John Adams,* of Franklin, of

*Mr. Whitney certifies to John Adams being "an eminent Christian," "one of the most thoroughly established believers in the divine mission of Jesus Christ;" just as others certify regarding Washington. He further adds, that "he had critically examined the evidences of Christianity," and that "few among the clergy were so thoroughly acquainted with the science of religion, both natural and revealed." These latter assertions I do not question. If you will turn to Jefferson's *Memoirs*, vol. iv., p. 300, you will find the result of this critical examination and thorough acquaintance, in the following extract of a letter from Jefferson to John Adams, dated January 11, 1817: "The result of your fifty or sixty years of religious reading in the four words :

Ethan Allen, is beyond all cavil, and most fully substantiates my remark, that three-fourths of our distinguished revolutionary patriots were sceptics. What the mass of the Congress of '76 were, of course I cannot, any more than you, pretend to say. But too much of men.

When you can explain to us of what else a nation is composed except of individuals, and how a revolution is ever to commence, unless some individual strike the first blow, thereby "resisting the powers that be" and "receiving to himself" (if Paul speak truth) "damnation;" then it may be worth while to inquire what right you or any one else has to explain away the apostles' words so as to apply, not in their plain, evident sense, but in some obscure, restricted sense, to suit the liberal politics of this age and this republic.

We will suppose, for the sake of argument, that you had established the fact that the gospels, as we now have them, were extant in the first century. This you have utterly failed to do, though you have furnished very plausible grounds for the belief, that a particular passage was promulgated in the apostolic age.* But suppose you had. Then you argue, that nothing but omniscience could have foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews. No? What event more probable, than that the Romans should, sooner or later, thus crush at its source the power of a people they disliked and contemned? How much more likely was this, or the fall of Babylon, on which my opponent so confidently rests as being miraculously foretold, than the subversion of European monarchies must have appeared eighty years ago, twenty-five years before the first revolutionary effort was made in this western continent? Yet in 1750 J. J. Rousseau's words were: "We approach a crisis. The age of revolution is at hand. I

'Be just and good,' is that in which all our inquiries must end; as the riddles of all the priesthood end in four more: '*Ubi panis ibi Deus.*' What all agree in is probably right; what no two agree in, most probably wrong." And if this do not satisfy you, then you may read, on page 331 of the same volume, the following, also addressed to John Adams: "Let me turn to your puzzling letter of May the 12th, on matter, spirit, motion, &c. *Its crowd of scepticisms kept me from sleep.*"

And this venerable philosopher it is, whose scepticism was of so daring a character, that it kept even Thomas Jefferson from sleep, and whose religion was avowedly comprised, (as I confess that mine is) in moral integrity alone—this man it is, regarding whose heterodoxy "not a suspicion was entertained," and for whose "deep conviction of the truth of our holy religion," the pastor of Quincy so unhesitatingly, and, it may be, conscientiously, endorses! If we yet needed a proof what such endorsements are worth, how strikingly is it here furnished!

Nor let us slander the memories of departed patriots, by complaining, that their creeds were breathed in the ear of private friendship alone, and not to a public that has yet to learn respect for honesty, and which may then justly challenge evasion and concealment, when it has frowned into impotence the tyranny which sits in judgment on conscience and arraigns for the crime of sincerity.

*Namely, Matthew, chap. xxiv., ver. 34.

hold it impossible, that the monarchies of Europe should have a much longer duration." How surely is the Genevese prophet's prediction now fulfilling!

I cannot imagine that you yourself are satisfied to explain Christ's prophecy touching the end of the world, by supposing in him an obscurity or rather inaccuracy of language such as fallible men, like you and me, might perchance fall into, in carelessly speaking of a presidential election, or on any other common topic. If such explanation be received, what becomes of the *infallibility* of the Bible language? Does inspiration blunder?

If you consider the difficulties and inconsistencies that are so lavishly scattered throughout the scriptural pages to be evidence of its genuine character, then, I admit, you may assume that "evidences on evidences thicken upon you, and you know not where to end." It would indeed be a tedious task to collect the whole.

You mainly rest the proof of the Old Testament's authenticity on the fulfilment of its predictions touching a Messiah. I earnestly second your request to our readers that they will carefully peruse the texts to which you refer them. I have done so; and if I had not ceased to wonder at any moral phenomenon, I should indeed be lost in astonishment at the comfortable confidence with which men persist in twisting such a rope of straw as this, and then imagining they have spun a cable which all the powers of human reason are too weak to sever. I am directed to look to Psalm xxii., ver. 6, 7, for a prophecy regarding Christ's sufferings, and I find king David complaining "that he is a worm and no man," and that he is "despised of the people." I am pointed to Zechariah, chap. xi., ver. 12, 13, as to a marvellous prediction specifying the very sum which Judas should receive for betraying his master; and I find a rambling story about Zechariah's two staves, called Beauty and Bands, the former of which he broke and then sold to his neighbours (a good bargain I think) for thirty pieces of silver. I am bid to remark how accurately Judas' conduct is foretold, Psalm xli., ver. 9, and there I find David lamenting that his familiar friend had lifted up his heel against him. The fact that no bones in the body of the crucified Jesus should be broken is, theologians declare, distinctly stated in Psalm xxxiv., ver. 20, and the parting of his garments among the soldiers in Psalm xxii., ver. 18; and I read in the former passage that "the Lord delivereth the righteous out of all his afflictions; he keepeth his bones, that not one of them is broken;" and in the latter I find the son of Jesse thus lamenting his own sad condition: "I may tell all my bones; they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them; and cast lots for my vesture." The very date of his birth and death, it is asserted, is miraculously specified by Daniel, (chap. ix., ver. 24, 25;) and there I find the Jewish seer (more than five hundred years before Christ) declaring, that in seventy weeks the Messiah should come. They were longer weeks than ours now-a-days; but I doubt not theological arithmetic will be at

no loss to stretch them, until, instead of being, as a plain man in his simplicity might imagine, about seventeen months, they are very ingeniously demonstrated to fill up five centuries. But why pursue the idle investigation further? unriddling old legends which the very writers, perchance, would have been puzzled to explain,* and imagining coincidences which no ingenuity but a theologian's ever ventured to imagine? I had as soon sit down to indite a folio in refutation of the very ingenious polemic who declared it to be a fact beyond all dispute, that the beast in the Apocalypse with seven heads and ten horns was no other than Napoleon Buonaparte;† or the learned logician who triumphantly proved the existence of the Trinity from the fact, that matter has three modes of extension—length, breadth, and thickness.

But now, it would remain for you to show, that all the events alleged to have been miraculously predicted, (as, for instance, Jesus' miraculous conception, the fact that none of his bones were broken, that his garments were divided among the soldiers, that he rose again, and so on) *actually happened*. The only weighty argument you have adduced to prove this, is contained in your eighth letter, and is triumphantly put forward by Watson, and indeed by all Christian advocates, as their chief anchor of dependance. It is, that the miracles and other events alluded to, took place before sharp-sighted opponents, who *did not deny them*, and though recorded and published at the time or soon after,‡ were *not contradicted or disproved by Jews and pagans*, though, if false, the materials necessary to disprove them must then have existed in abundance. This seems to me the most specious argument that

* It would not be the first time that a learned dealer in obscurities has fallen into such a difficulty. Richter, the well-known German writer, was once, in his advanced age, asked by a friend to explain an eloquent passage from his works, the meaning of which he had found it impossible to fathom. "My friend," replied the old man, "when I wrote that sentence God and I knew what it meant. God may know it still, but, for myself, I have completely forgotten it."

† After showing that the seven heads and ten horns corresponded exactly to the nations which Napoleon had overthrown and the crowns he had disposed of, he clenches his argument by giving to each of the letters of the French emperor's name its received value as Roman numerals; he adds them up, and lo! they amount exactly to six hundred and sixty-six. He then refers you to Revelations, chap. xiii., ver. 18, and exultingly exclaims: "Can any man in his sober senses now doubt the inspiration of Holy Writ, or hesitate on my interpretation of it?"

Methinks this may fairly match Daniel's image of iron and clay, with its laboured interpretation; or his vision of the four beasts, or of the ram and he-goat, or any of the rest. The one is just as "clear, full, and unanswerable" as the others.

‡ This, however, be it remembered, is, in a great measure, an assumption. The evidence in favour of the existence of any portion of our New Testament in the first century is presumptive only. And as to the gospels and epistles being *published*, the word had an exceedingly different meaning in apostolic days and in ours. That eminent critic, Semler, admits—(and how momentous the arguments contained in the admission!)—"The Christian doctors *never brought their sacred books before the common people*, although people in general have been wont to think otherwise. *During the first ages, they were in the hands of the clergy alone.*"—*Dissertat. in Tertul. l., sec. x. note 57.*

has been urged throughout the whole discussion. If it be conceded, there is a degree of presumptive evidence in favor of the narrations. If it be inadmissible, then not only your argument regarding prophecy, but also that touching miracles—in a word, the whole superstructure of your laboured defence of revelation—has nothing on which to stand. Now, I deny that it is admissible. I deny that we can tell whether these things were contradicted and disproved at the time or not. To say nothing of the lapse of time, which sweeps so many records from existence, we have positive proof, *that the writings of the opponents of Christianity were carefully collected and burnt by imperial intolerance.* The emperor Theodosius, in the latter part of the fourth century, passed an express decree to that effect, couched in these terms:

“We decree that all writings whatever, which Porphyry or any one else hath written against the Christian religion, in the possession of whomsoever they may be found, should be committed to the fire; for we would not suffer any of those things so much as to come to men’s ears, which tend to provoke God to wrath, and to offend the minds of the pious.”*

And, in effect, we find that Porphyry’s works against the Christian religion “are lost,” though several other of his treatises, (that on vegetable-diet for instance) are still extant. In like manner, not one line written by Celsus has descended to us. For all we know of his writings we must trust to the fairness of Origen, his opponent; seeing that the Christian father’s quotations from Celsus’ arguments alone remain to indicate what these arguments were. The Christians are very apt to forget, in citing the concessions of the Epicurean philosopher. Horne has the assurance to tell us, that “Celsus *never* denied the miracles of Christ.” All he *can* say, is that Origen does not quote his denial. It is not possible only, it is *probable*, that Origen, who avowedly practised deception to serve a good cause, (*Mosheim’s Dissert.*, p. 203) has given us a sad travesty of his opponent’s arguments. And from this travesty all the heathen philosopher’s sentiments are unhesitatingly gathered, and Horne has not even the fairness to inform his readers that Celsus’ works are not in existence.

Under these circumstances, to talk of what has or has not been contradicted by Christianity’s early opponents is idle in the extreme. Theodosius has taken excellent care to “suffer none of those things so much as to come to our ears.” There may have been hundreds on hundreds of heretical refutations published

* As great weight attaches to the argument deduced from this notable decree, I here subjoin the passage in the original Latin, as quoted by Lardner, vol. iv., p. 3, “*Sancimus, igitur, ut omnia quæcumque Porphyrius aut quisvis alius contra religiosum Christianorum cultum, conscripsit, apud quemcumque inventa fuerint, igni mancipentur, omnia enim provocantia Deum ad iracundiam scripta, et pias mentes offendentia, ne ad aures quidem hominum venire volumus.*”

Men could not, methinks, have any *very* strong conviction of the strength or goodness of their cause, who deemed it necessary to employ in its defence such a weapon as this.

during the first three centuries ; all only to share the fate of Don Quixote's library.

I thank you for your observations on the various modes of writing in ancient times ; correcting, as they do, an unsustained remark of mine, that the only mode of recording the laws spoken of by Moses was on plastered stones. There were, if the Pentateuch speak truth, other modes : on golden plates, door-posts, rods, and perhaps on palm-leaves and palm-bark. Are these very suitable materials for writing a long history ? I think not. Papyrus or even parchment it is not pretended that they had, as early as Moses' time. Be this as it may, the matter is a trifle.

You have given yourself superfluous trouble to prove that the ancient traditions of various nations resemble each other. No doubt of it ; and heretical antiquarians, availing themselves of the labours of Sir William Jones, have thence drawn very plausible arguments in support of the belief, that the Christian and other modern creeds are but the common offspring of the far more ancient theology of India.

The geological facts you adduce, in so far as they are corroborated by actual observation, are interesting in a scientific point of view. That they furnish not a shadow of proof regarding *one great, universal* deluge, I need hardly repeat. No one denies, that many of these phenomena have been produced by the "rush of mighty waters." Geologists, sceptical as orthodox, admit, that the ocean may have occupied *successively* every portion of the globe. History records numerous eruptions which may suggest to us how such changes have occurred. About two hundred and fifty years since, in the territory of Dort (South Holland) one hundred thousand persons perished by a flood, and in the neighbourhood of Dullart a still greater number. In modern times the half of Friesland was submerged. Or, to speak of more gradual encroachments or recedings of the ocean, the Baltic has gradually covered a large portion of Pomerania, while Ravenna, in ancient times a noted seaport, is now at the distance of four miles from the coast. Add to this the influence of volcanic agency, including the sudden convulsions known as earthquakes, and we have causes amply adequate to produce the effects to which you have alluded. By these latter causes whole mountains have been swallowed up ; for instance, the Pico in the Moluccas, accounted of equal height to that of Teneriffe, in the place of which a lake has been left ; and a considerable mountain near Port Morant in Jamaica, which disappeared during the great earthquake of 1692, also leaving a great lake in its place.

It is little surprising that, in uncultivated ages, when every trifling incident was exaggerated, and when man's world scarcely extended beyond his visible horizon, or perchance the hunting-grounds of his horde,—it is little surprising, that in early ages of ignorance, man should speak of an inundation which overwhelmed *his* little world, as of a universal deluge. The Indian who should see his tribe and its enemies respectively exterminate each other,

until he and his squaw only survived the slaughter, might sit down, in the silent forest, by the corpses of his comrades, and lament that they of all the earth's inhabitants had alone escaped the mysterious vengeance of the Great Spirit. And their descendants might receive the tale, and believe it; and it would not be the first tale that has been received on no better authority.

But imagine not that I rest the case here. Geology furnishes proofs enough *against* the notion of a general flood. Limestone deposits are continually found, one layer over another, each separated from the other by intervening strata of stone, clay, lava, &c. To select one example: In the district of Darley Moor, (Derbyshire, England) the superficial bed is of a coarse, sandy stone, extending to the depth of one hundred and twenty yards; the attrition which has rounded its particles, like sea-shore pebbles, cannot be attributed but to the action of rivers or the ocean. To this succeeds a black, indurated clay, partially petrified, and also upwards of a hundred yards deep. Beneath that we have limestone to the depth of fifty yards; then succeeds black stone or marble, resembling lava, sixteen yards; then limestone again, fifty yards; again incumbent on black stone or lava, forty-six yards. Once more succeeds limestone sixty yards, and black stone beneath twenty-two yards; and finally we arrive at limestone which has not yet been penetrated. Throughout all these four distinct beds of limestone,* thus separated from each other by the deposits of ages, are numerous impressions of sea-fish and other marine animals; a proof of their gradual formation and inhumation throughout a mighty succession of generations.—How impossible, on the theory of one universal deluge, to explain such phenomena as these, which present themselves, with trifling modifications, throughout the whole extent of either hemisphere. They unlock to us the secret of a stupendous succession (one might almost say) of *worlds*, of which a few remains, hardened into immortality by that very time which has mouldered so many of the rest to impalpable dust, offer themselves as enduring witnesses of what was even beyond the utmost verge of tradition—strange links, whose silent eloquence connects us, as it were, with the living things of a forgotten eternity!

That, in ages long gone by, the arctic regions enjoyed a milder temperature than at this day, and that a slow and gradual change imperceptibly occurs throughout the climates of the world, plausible evidence may be adduced in proof; among them, the facts, that animals and vegetables, now the growth of southern climes only, are frequently found in northern latitudes; but it is mere unsupported theological conjecture which attributes this to a "refrigerating change" produced by a universal deluge.

I perceive in the vague traditions of distant and ignorant ages no *infallible* evidence of any thing, no *probable* evidence of what is, in itself, improbable. If others see more than I do, they may

* And how many others may yet lie beneath them who can tell?

congratulate themselves on their strength of vision, without arraigning my shortsightedness, or declaring, that therefore I "ought to be damned."

That various ancient historians have corroborated historical portions of the Old Testament, I do not doubt, even though you have adduced but wholesale assertion for the fact. Many of these historical portions may, for aught I know, really be true. That pagans may even have aided in giving circulation to marvellous legends similar to those of the Bible, is likely enough; and, I dare say, may be, in individual cases, positively proved. But what of all this? Are we bound to believe all old stories, of which two versions, current perhaps in distinct nations, happen to resemble each other? Our creed will be a pretty long one, if we do.

The concessions in the Talmud, with the exception of its falling into the prevalent superstition of the day, and, like the early Christians, admitting its opponents' miracles and ascribing them to the devil, may all be received. They prove only the existence and violent death of Jesus. It is the fashion to insist on such evidence as this, *which substantiates only what is not denied*, as proof of scriptural inspiration and Bible miracles; a fashion which has its rise either in thoughtless inaccuracy or some less innocent source.

You seem to have forgotten, that the very first differences between the Greek and Latin churches arose in the eighth century, and that it was not till two centuries and a half afterwards that they were finally separated. Otherwise you could not possibly have asserted, that catholics had not its sole keeping, "not even for a moment." The moment happens to be, as I said, about a thousand years. As to the Bible condemning catholics, that is your assertion: they assert that it supports them and condemns you. I pretend not to judge between you.

Popery (you argue, in order to secure a ground of retreat from the mass of evidences of my Athanasian miracle,) did not exist in the fourth century. By a reference to Mosheim, you will learn, that, in the third century, catholic rites and ceremonies of every kind multiplied in the church. Exorcisms and spells were used, and wedlock among the clergy was interdicted.* All connection was avoided with the excommunicated, as persons given over to the devil.† Rigid discipline and penance were imposed on those who had incurred the censures of the church; and some of the churches were probably embellished with images and other ornaments.‡ The use of incense had been introduced.§ The Lord's supper was celebrated with solemnity and pomp, gold and silver vessels being employed. The remission of sins by the bishop, in baptism, was believed.|| Fasting was held in high esteem, as a holy preservative against the devil's power;¶ and no Christian

* Mosheim's *Eccl. Hist.*, vol. i., p. 234. + *Ibid.* ‡ *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 235.
 † *Ibid.* § *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 236. ¶ *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 238.

ndertook any thing of moment without arming himself with the ign of the cross.* In the life of Gregory, surnamed *Thaumaturgus* (the wonder-worker,) as quoted by Mosheim, vol. i., c. 202, we read: "When Gregory saw that the simple and un-killed multitude *persisted in their worship of images*, he granted them a permission to indulge in the like pleasures, in celebrating the memory of the holy martyrs." (Gregory died about the middle of the third century.) Add to this the already acknowledged pre-eminence of the Roman pontiff,† and have we not, even as early as the *third* century, (not to say the *fourth*,) almost every one of what protestants deem the leading abominations which distinguish the Babylon of the Apocalypse?

As to your assertions regarding the emperor Zeno and Æneas Gazæus, had you referred to any good biographical dictionary, you might have learnt that Zeno was a name common to several Roman emperors on the throne of Constantinople in the fourth and fifth centuries, and that Æneas' works are known to all antiquarians; one edition having been published at Basil in 1560, and another at Leipsic in 1655. You tell us, that Mosheim says not a word of the miracles, nor names Æneas of Gaza or Marcellinus. Had you perused Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History you must have known, that he not only relates the miracle, not only expressly quotes Æneas of Gaza and Marcellinus, Procopius and Julian, by name, as testifying to it, but adds: "*This remarkable fact can scarcely be denied, since it is supported by the testimony of the most credible and respectable witnesses.*"‡ We have here a specimen how different a thing it is to make assertions and to substantiate them.

Had I access (which I have not,) to additional sources of information regarding the Florentine miracle, I could probably give you authority much more direct than Mr. Forsyth's. But it needs not. One example is as good as half a dozen; and one you will scarcely now deny that you have.

I could have supplied you with a sufficiency of far better authenticated visions and dreams than those you have taken the trouble to select. It was but the other day that a gentleman of this city, formerly a wealthy and prosperous merchant, now a clergyman, called at our office; and, with a kindness and fervour of manner which left no doubt of his sincerity and friendly intentions, desired to communicate to me his experience. A temporary reverse of fortune in business had, he said, been succeeded by a sickness almost unto death, during which, warned by unutterable visions, he devoted himself, body and soul, as he expressed it, to Jehovah God. Recovering his health, and losing recollection of his vow, he attempted again to join, though

* Mosheim's *Eccl. Hist.*, vol. i., p. 238.

† Cyprian, *Ep.* lxxiii., p. 131. He had the right of convening councils, presiding in them, &c., &c. Other powers were added later.

‡ Mosheim's *Eccl. Hist.*, vol. i., p. 401.

moderately, in the gaieties of our city. "I attended" said he—and his eye kindled with the light of enthusiasm; he rose from his chair, and, as inspired by the recollection of the scene, pursued his narrative with an eloquence of language and gesture I have seldom seen equalled—"I attended a numerous assembly at our City Hotel. Half the beauty and fashion of New-York was there. I obtained as my partner one of the loveliest creatures in the room; and, as together we threaded the mazes of the dance, 'Can any scene'—such was my thought—'be more blissful than this? Can any beings be fairer or happier than these that now surround me?' Suddenly there fell, as it were, palpable scales from my eyes, and, even amid the sound of that inspiring music and the excitement of that giddy dance, I saw—I saw what is stamped on my memory, as with a brand of fire! I saw that ball-room floor hung over a fearful pit that yawned down—down to the bottomless darkness of perdition! I saw the thoughtless human beings before me suspended above this yawning gulf, each one by a slender, slender thread, finer than the finest lines of gossamer that float in the sun of summer, going up, as it were, from the breath of each of their nostrils. Above their heads the hand of the angel of mercy collected and grasped these filmy threads of life. Elevated in one corner of the ball-room sat the Ancient of Days, and beside him the angel of vengeance with a flaming sword, like to a painter's representation of the forked lightning. The avenging spirit raised his weapon, and turned to his heavenly master as awaiting his nod, ere he severed the spider threads that centred in Mercy's hand."

The speaker shuddered, as if the scene were yet before his senses, and then in a low and hurried voice proceeded: "I saw a change come over the countenance of Jehovah God—his smile of ineffable benevolence was deepening into a frown almost of anger—the avenger saw and understood the sign—I marked the lightning flash of his sword—I saw the greedy flames from that gulf of darkness—I heard the hopeless voice of anguish from its depths of misery—and I saw and heard no more! I relinquished my partner's hand, and dropped on the ball-room floor in a swoon. With returning sense came contrition and conviction. I renewed my broken vows to Jehovah God—and I have kept them! For eight years I have lived alone to Jesus Christ and him crucified. Oh," he continued, as he took my hand in both his, "yield your soul to him while there is yet time. I have not believed—I have *seen*, I have *known* all this. Flee to the rock of ages, ere the whelming waves of eternity roll over your soul, and engulf it for ever!"

I was touched by the good man's earnestness, but certainly not convinced by his vision, except of the evident fact, that his nerves were in a diseased state, and that his imagination had got the better of his judgment. If any one can draw other inferences even from the best-attested narrations of dreams and trances, he has more faith than I. A distempered fancy can kill and can

cure ; it can create a fairy realm of its own ; and, aided by a few fortunate coincidences,* it can win over thousands of believing subjects, from the shouting methodist, noisy in his religion getting, to the quiet shaker, twirled round, by the influence of the spirit, for half an hour together.† If I know any thing of my own temperament and tranquillity of nerve, it will be long ere the infection caught on the "anxious seats," or among mother Ann's disciples, shall touch my imagination or work my conversion. Till then, I shall continue to regard the ghostly dreams of others as a human phenomenon of mischievous influence, yet of not uninteresting character ; a phenomenon from the influence of which I will undertake to guarantee any child that shall grow up under my care until his powers of reasoning and observation are developed.

When my easy and perhaps injudicious compliance with your most unwarrantable request to give my ideas on suicide and infanticide encourages you to go on, and (in the midst of a grave discussion about the Bible's authenticity,) to insist on my arranging for you what is to be done with the deaf, dumb, blind, maniacs, idiots, and so forth—and all this under the pretence that unless I can justify every single custom of antiquity I must admit the necessity of revelation—when, I say, the discussion takes such a turn, it is high time to put an end to the trifling. There are fifty customs of antiquity—there are five hundred customs of this very day and country—that no man of sense would attempt to defend. And if man's imperfection be proof that the Christian Scriptures are inspired, heaven knows there is proof enough, without wandering back to Socrates or the Spartans. I trust to the spirit of improvement, *you* to the Bible, the *Mussulman* to the Koran, for reform. All this is well enough ; but for you or he to assume that if man has ever erred, and is ever to find out and correct his error, your revelations, and *nothing but your revelations*, will enable him to do so, is a degree of childish assumption to which it were waste of paper to reply.

I hardly know whether your allusion to the so-grievously-misrepresented system of utility be entitled to a word of comment. If it be *your* opinion that the murder not only of the sickly and infirm, but of those whose creed squares not with ours,—also that stealing, deceiving, and so on, be, *in themselves*, useful, all I can say is, it is not mine. I fail to perceive the great temporal

* Five hundred dreams, perhaps, are uninterpreted, unanswered, and forgotten ; one chances to fit ; and it is trumpeted abroad, in tract and pamphlet, as an infallible evidence of a particular providence. If the one that coincides be evidence *for*, the five hundred that never coincide should surely be evidences *against*. Our tract-makers forget this.

† This exercise—an involuntary one as shakers assure us—is one of the most common forms of assurance among that singular sect, that the favoured subject of it has received that divine influence which fits him to take up a cross against the flesh, and become one of the spiritual children of mother Ann Lee.

advantage of such practices. If there are others who do perceive it, there is no great danger of their becoming utilitarians; for it requires a clear and rational head to adopt so common-sense a system.

You are welcome to the argument in favour of Christianity deduced from the cases of religious suicide I adduced. I hope it will be long before we obtain such an one in favour of scepticism.

I wonder, since you justify capital punishment by adopting the Old Testament command of life for life,* that you are not consistent enough to take the remainder of Moses' moral code along with it: "An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth:†" death for idolatry;‡ death for Sabbath-breaking:§ and all the rest of it.

We will not argue the point whether I am well versed in polemical lore or not. I think that, for a layman, my theological proficiency may pass muster indifferently well.

To your uncalled-for assertion, that, in replying to Watson, Leslie, and Horne, I *wilfully* misrepresent their arguments, I have no reply to make. When any one, claiming to be a Christian, yet casting behind him the command§ of him whom he calls his master, travels out of the record to attack motives, thus usurping the province which in theory he declares to belong to the Searcher of Hearts alone, the spirit evinced merits no answer, and the pseudo-argument requires none. Should I ever so far forget what is due to myself and to the cause I serve, as to instal myself judge of others' consciences, then may I be called upon to permit an intrusion on my own. I will say a few words to our readers touching my strictures, but, in view of the above considerations, I have nothing to say to you on the subject. Of our readers, then, I would request, that they read Watson and Leslie for themselves, and then, that they decide whether my opponent's accusation has even the shadow of a foundation. They will not, of course, find the premises and consequents in the exact juxta-position I gave them; polemics must be simple souls, indeed, to blunder so grossly; but they *will* find, that these theologians' chief arguments strictly coincide with the former; and the conclusions they would have us receive as proved, with the latter. This is all I intended to convey, and all, I think you will admit, that is conveyed, by my language. You will also find, that I have *carefully distinguished* between the causes of the spread of Christianity in the first centuries, and its spread under Constantine; attributing the first to *anti-Christian* persecution, the second to *Christian* violence. Nor can you fail to remark, that I quoted from Mosheim simply for the purpose of showing that Christianity, in an early stage (not the *earliest*) of its progress, was disseminated by mercenary and brutal motives, and, therefore, that it could not fairly be argued, that the parallel between Christianity and

* Genesis, chap. ix., ver. 6.

+ Deuteronomy, chap. xiii., ver. 9.

‡ Numbers, chap. xv., ver. 35.

§ Matthew, chap. vii., ver. 1.

Mahometanism was untenable throughout. The Christians of the *first* century are spoken of by the impartial Tacitus* in even harsher terms of reprobation than are those of the *fourth* by Mosheim; but as I considered it possible, to say the least, that the Roman historian wrote under the influence of prejudice, I made no assertion regarding their characters. I rather imagine them to have been honest, simple-hearted, and usually ignorant enthusiasts in the mass, like the Mormonites of our day; though enlightened individuals among them may have distinguished, through the chaff of mystery and miracle, the good wheat of many of Jesus' moral precepts. Such were the very men to be goaded on, by persecution, to the zeal that glories in martyrdom. But how often do we find that credulity alone, unfanned by persecution, will spring up to a sudden blaze! Have we not before us, at this very day, in this very country, the believers in the Golden Bible of Mormon, utterly unheard of one short twelve-month since, and now, by the latest accounts, numbering *fifteen hundred* members! The argument derived from the rapid spread of Christianity is altogether untenable; and here I dismiss it, without following my opponent in his researches touching the obscurity or notoriety of early Christianity; researches bearing but remotely on our present discussion.

I perceive not that you have, in any degree, disproved Gibbon's inferences touching the darkness of the passion. The titles of Seneca's and Livy's works were given. They treated of natural phenomena. Suppose they omitted some of these phenomena of an ancient date: was there the least chance that they would fail to select, as an illustration, the preternatural darkness they themselves must have witnessed—the most remarkable, perhaps, in the world? or is it conceivable, that whatever other eclipses they may have omitted, they would omit this? And against all this weight of evidence, you adduce the alleged admission of Celsus, every word of whose writings is lost, and the appeal of the crazy Tertullian, who, according to his own confession, "finds no other means to prove himself to be impudent with success and happily a fool, than by his contempt of shame," and who holds a thing "to be certainly true because it is clearly impossible."† What is such a man's appeal worth? Would the Roman government, think you, take the trouble seriously to reply to one so confessedly and vaingloriously impudent? Or if they did, was it not

* His words are, "A people held in abhorrence for their crimes;" and whose superstition, he adds, "spread not only over Judea but to Jerusalem, whither flow, from all quarters, things vile and shameful, and where they find shelter and encouragement."—*Annals*, xv., p. 44.

† These, strange as it may seem, are literal translations from Tertullian's "*De carne Christi*," vol. iii., p. 352, of Semler's edition, 1770. The original of the first sentence reads: "*Alias non invenio materias confusionis, quæ me per contemptum ruboris probent, bene impudentem et feliciter stultum.*" and of the latter, which refers to Christ's resurrection: "*Certum est, quia impossibile.*"

easy enough for Theodosius to burn the document, along with Celsus and Porphyry's scepticism?

I have never adduced the strange silence of cotemporary historians as other than indirect and presumptive evidence of the falsity of a narration; and such it must be confessed to be, in pagan as in scriptural history.

I have already proved, that Christianity, long before the time of the Nicene Council, was catholicism, and therefore that our Bible was selected for us by catholics.

A society for the protection of uncivilized nations from the vices and superstitions of civilization, and for instructing savages in the more useful arts of domestic life, I should greatly approve. I am not without hopes, some day or other, of seeing such an one established.

Having already given my authority (letter viii.,) for the finding of the book of the law, I advert to it here, not in compliance with your idle reiteration regarding it, but to remark that in 2 Esdras, chap. xiv., there is a probable enough account of the manufacture of the book found by Hilkiah. Esdras declares that he, being inspired by a draught of fire-coloured water, wrote it. This corroborates my suggestion that the Pentateuch, with its code of laws, might have been indited some five or six hundred years before Christ. The people seem to have received Esdras' Book of the Law with as much marvelling, and with as implicit faith, as they did the command touching booths to which I have already adverted. I know that you deny the divine authority of the Apocrypha, but I know also that the majority of Christians (I mean the catholics,) admit it; and I see not why they have not as good a right to decide as you. At any rate, you will not surely refuse to books which the Christian world has almost been persuaded to declare canonical, the humble rank of a history as authentic at least as other uninspired histories.

I am inclined to believe, from the above and other evidence, that during or subsequent to the reign of Josiah, (some five or six hundred years before Christ,) the Pentateuch was put together by some ingenious scribe, and was received by the people, as described. I offer this, however, as a thing likely only, not by any means as proved. When we speak of such events two or three thousand years old, possibilities or probabilities are all we can reasonably pretend to substantiate. Nor is it material that we adopt any hypothesis on the question.

There is a class of self-styled philosophers to whom Rousseau's strictures will apply. His concluding remarks evidence a confused intellect: to employ abuse against any doctrines is indefensible; to subvert a true creed is, of course, mischievous; mildly to expose a false one cannot be injurious.

In regard to the great names you adduce as props to Christianity, it might suffice to remark, that it does not follow, because a man is an admirable naturalist, that he must therefore also be an excellent theologian; or that a metaphysician, even of the first

rank, is of necessity free from early-imbibed superstitions. Nor may we assume that these great men gave an ignorant and intolerant world to know all their secret doubts on subjects till lately considered, by the mass of mankind, too sacred to be investigated at all.

But, aside from these general considerations, the orthodoxy of Bacon, of Milton, of Locke, if not of Newton, is very questionable. Bacon, as you remind me, expressed his belief "that this universal frame had a mind." In one sense no one will deny this; but let us admit his deism. He does not, at the least, seem to think such a belief very necessary or very material to virtue. He says (as I have already quoted to you from his essays), "Atheism did never perturb states, for it makes men weary of themselves as looking no further; and we see the times inclined to atheism (as the time of Augustus Cæsar,) were civil times; but superstition hath been the confusion of many states." The expression of such sentiments would procure for a man, even at this day, an atheistical reputation.

Milton's moral heresies as contained in his celebrated "Doctrine of Divorce" are well known. In that work, among other hazarded sentiments, he has the following: "The greatest burden in the world is superstition, not only of ceremonies in the church, but of imaginary and scarecrow sins at home."* A late writer in the "Edinburgh Review," in noticing his "*De Doctrina Christiana*," says: "Some of the heterodox opinions which Milton avows, seem to have excited considerable amazement; particularly his notions on the subject of polygamy. We can scarcely conceive that any one could have read his *Paradise Lost* without suspecting him of heterodoxy; nor do we think that any reader, acquainted with the history of his life, ought to be much startled with his opinions on marriage. *The opinions which he expressed regarding the nature of the deity, the eternity of matter, and the observance of the Sabbath, might, we think, have caused more just surprise.*" So much for the orthodoxy of England's immortal bard.

Locke's refutation of the doctrine of innate ideas is conceived by many to overturn all natural religion. His "Reasonable Christianity" is confessedly unitarian; and he is continually spoken of by the English orthodox clergy as a disciple of unitarianism; a grade of religion which, you have often told me, you hold to be little, if any, better than no religion at all.

Newton's deism is neither of the most lucid nor of the most amiable character, and furnishes a striking evidence how a man may evince an almost superhuman power of intellect on a practical subject which he has made the study of his life, yet descend, on a theoretica^l one, to a level with the mystagogue.

* How far his ideas regarding ceremonies went, we may gather from his life by Dr. Johnson. "In the distribution of his hours," says Johnson (in his "Lives of the Poets," article *Milton*, p. 134), "there was no hour of prayer, either solitary or with his household: omitting public prayers, he omitted all."

"The sublime Newton," says D'Holbach, in his *System of Nature*, "is but a child when he quits physical science to lose himself in the imaginary regions of theology." In proof of my opinion regarding the character of Newton's deism, I quote from his creed as follows: "God governs all, not as the soul of the world, but as the lord and sovereign of all things. It is because of his sovereignty that we call him Lord God, *Παντοκράτωρ*, the universal emperor. In truth, the word *God* is relative, and has reference to slaves; deity is the denomination of the sovereignty of God, not over his own body, as those would have it who regard God as the soul of the world, but over slaves."* A little further he tells us: "God is one and the same for ever, and every where, not only by his own virtue or energy, but also in virtue of his substance." And again: "All things are contained in him, and move in him, but without reciprocal action; (*sed sine mutua passione*, is the original phrase.) God feels nothing from the movements of bodies; nor do they experience any resistance from his universal presence." But enough of Newton's creed. What an anomalous creature is man! how mighty, at once, and how impotent, in his pride of intellect!

As to the Hon. Robert Boyle, I have not a word to say against his orthodoxy. His biographer relates, "that he never pronounced the word *God*, without first making an awful pause."

An unpleasant task remains to me. I have ever witnessed with regret the course too often pursued by Christian apologists in regard to their opponents; the odious travesties of their principles, unsupported by a single quotation from their writings, and the wholesale slanders of their characters, unsustained by one authenticated fact, which, in the heat of controversy, polemics have not scrupled to circulate. I have witnessed this course, I say, with regret; both because I desire to see Christianity have a fair chance, which no system, so injudiciously and unworthily defended, can ever have; and also, because I would not willingly see sceptics tempted to intolerance, or induced to imagine that scandal and piety are synonymous terms; or, as they might be, urged to a retaliation, the materials for which exist in such superabundance on every side. For myself, I trust I shall ever bear in mind, that the best cause in the world would be ruined by such mismanagement, and that I shall not be led to confound the principles of any system with the practice of its defenders.

It is not my business to be the eulogist or the apologist of any set or sect of men. Sceptics, doubtless, have had their faults and failings like the rest of mankind; and there have been, in all ages, men equally devoid of prejudice and of principle; such, perhaps, as Rochester and his associates. But what I protest against—no, what justice and charity protest against—is, that any man should sit down to vilify characters, some of which he might be proud to resemble, without once taking the trouble to sub-

* See "*Principia Mathematica*," p. 528, Lond. edit., 1726.

stantiate, even by a show of evidence, his vilifications. When I stoop to imitate such an example, retailing all the sickening stories that have transpired regarding priests and pious professors, not only in ancient but in modern days (the bishop of Clogher's, for instance), and not only in other countries but in this very city of ours—when I dishonour myself by giving currency to paltry scandal like this, I shall hope to be reminded, as I now remind my opponent, that weapons so unmanly, and so *unchristian*,* are equally impotent against an opponent and fatal to oneself.

To similar conduct, as much perhaps as to the efforts of anti-christians, is it owing, that unbelief now so extensively pervades both Great Britain and this republic. To the insolence of the French clergy as much as to the eloquence of Voltaire or the logic of D'Holbach, may be ascribed the almost annihilation of religion in France; so that, at this moment, there is hardly to be found in that country (as every traveller knows,) one believer for twenty sceptics—in that generous country, which so lately effected a revolution, bloodless and blameless beyond any other the world ever saw. In Germany, where, if Dwight speak truth, not three believers in an eternal hell are to be found,† the cause progresses more quietly, but not less surely.‡ All over the world,

* John, chap. viii., ver. 7.

† You shall have orthodox authority in proof of this: "The doctrine of the eternity of future punishment is almost universally rejected. I have seen but one person in Germany who believed it, and but one other whose mind was wavering on the subject."—*Dwight's Travels in Germany*; G. C. and H. Carvill, 1829, p. 421.

Universalism, you remind us (in your fifth letter), is even more pernicious than scepticism, "as making the Bible the encourager of crimes that hurry us hence by sending us the sooner to heaven." The whole nation of Germans, then, are *worse than sceptics*. Yet they are a very sober, steady, quiet nation, nevertheless.

‡ Speaking of the theological debates which, since the time of *Eiekhorn*, made Germany the arena of Biblical criticism, the son of our noted theologian honestly confesses: "During the theological contest, the genuineness and authenticity of the Old Testament was first attacked, and outwork after outwork was gained, until all belief in it as a revelation was almost literally exploded from Germany. The epistles of the New Testament were afterwards assailed with the same weapons. The inspiration of one writer after another ceased to be believed, until, by an almost equally large proportion of the theologians, they were also viewed as unworthy of regard, except so far as they contain a beautiful system of morality, and so far as they are historically interesting from their instrumentality in spreading Christianity. At a subsequent period the gospels were attacked in a similar manner. The character of Christ was soon generally believed by the clergy to have no more claims to our respect than those of Plato and Aristotle, unless from the greater purity of his example and of his code of morals, and from his exhibition of powers of intellect which most of them would have probably admitted to be much superior to those of the Greek philosophers."—*Dwight's Germany*, p. 409.

And again: "The influence of this almost universal scepticism was not surpassed by that of the French philosophers during the middle and latter end of the eighteenth century." "Whenever a people discover that the clergy are sceptics, they will of course adopt similar opinions. This was the most powerful cause of the overthrow of the Christian religion among the people of Germany."—*Ibid.*, p. 410.

the seeds which traduced philosophers have sowed, are rapidly springing up. All over the world, the church is in danger. In every civilized country, men begin to ask whether the belief in the infallibility of any book be not mischievous and immoral. In either hemisphere the reign of reason and light and liberty is approaching—the era when all actions shall be judged by their permanent utility, and all men esteemed according to their moral worth.

In closing a discussion which I attempted in the hope that it might send forth a tributary rill to swell the great and gushing stream of human improvement, I desire distinctly to state, that with the Bible, as a curious and ancient legend, I find no fault. As such I regard it with interest and curiosity, not unmixed with a feeling of gratulation, that the world is outgrowing its leading strings. But what I do find fault with, what I hold to be mischievous in the extreme, and what has induced me to undertake the task of probing its evidences, is the popular belief that the Bible is God's book; that every sentiment it contains is perfect, and therefore cannot be improved; that every word it records is infallible, and therefore must not be questioned. To a belief so cramping as this, and not to the book, in its proper place and without its undue authority, I make objection. Any creed, any code, any system, no matter how useful and how comparatively enlightened at the period of its promulgation, *once stamped with the seal of infallibility*, becomes, in the progress of human improvement, a clog, a drag chain, a thus-far-shalt-thou-go-and-no-farther argument. That which once aided and encouraged mankind to reach a certain point, retards or arrests their advance, when that point is gained. So has it often been with great names: so will it ever be with holy books.*

In disproof of the divine pretensions of the Bible, I have called our readers' attention:

First. To the extreme uncertainty of all history, more especially of all ancient history.

Secondly. To the degree and the character of evidence necessary to prove a miracle.†

What becomes of your exulting gratulations, regarding the gospel's recognition over the civilized world, and its triumphs from sea to sea! and what of your assertion, that France in 1789 is the *only* example of a nation without revelation?

* In the "Life of Mahomet" published by the London "Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge," the writer, speaking of the Koran and its precepts, says: "The benefit of these laws being reduced to writing, is, however, more than counterbalanced by the evil of their being irrevocable. What the ignorant barbarian instituted, succeeding generations have been obliged to retain. No matter how absurd, how injurious the decree, religion commands the faithful Moslem to abide by it. The almighty was its author, and he is all-wise; and, moreover, as wise at one time as at another. How, then, shall we amend the divine ordination, or fancy that he himself need amend it?" p. 30.

How true and how important is this!

† Shelley has somewhere justly observed, "that we can have no rational

Thirdly. To the fact, that many miracles which were once acknowledged but which are now admitted to be impostures, have a much greater weight of historical evidence than have the scriptural miracles.

Fourthly. To the inutility of miracles, even if proved, and to the impossibility of judging supernatural phenomena by human sense.

Fifthly. To the sanguinary and barbarous character, and immoral tendency, of the narrations given and the precedents recorded in the Old Testament.

Sixthly. To the lack of any thing like lucid historical evidence, to enlighten us touching the authorship or the original date, either of the Old Testament books, or of the gospels.

Seventhly. To the more than doubtful honesty of the Christian fathers, through whose hands the New Testament passed; and to the mass of forgeries from which a council of these fathers separated the present gospels and epistles.

Eighthly. To the equivocal and futile character of the evidence from prophecy.

Ninthly. To the anti-republicanism of the Bible; to the true character of the French Revolution; and to the scepticism of distinguished democrats.

And *Tenthly.* To the distinction between morality and religion.

Let others judge how the task has been performed; my conscience acquits me of any save friendly and upright intentions.

ROBERT DALE OWEN,

grounds for believing a recorded miracle, unless we first believe, that the historian's inaccuracy or dishonesty would be a greater miracle than the story he records." "This objection," as DR. GIBBONS, in his *BERKEAN*, well observes, "has never been satisfactorily answered."

[Some remarks of Mr. Bachelier, relative to such parts of the foregoing letter as he judged to require comment, may be found in the Appendix, Note D.]

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.

[The following letter is part of a correspondence addressed by me in May, 1831, to the editor of the Boston "Trumpet," and published in his paper, and in the "Free Enquirer." It was in reply to the Rev. Linus S. Everett, of Charlestown, who, in a series of letters addressed to, and published by Mr. Whittemore, grievously misstated and impugned our moral and religious principles.]

R. D. C.

TO THOMAS WHITEMORE.

Your correspondent's gravest accusation against us, is, that we have spoken of marriage as a mischievous institution, and of chastity as a folly.

The readers of the Free Enquirer will bear me witness, that in the reply I am about to make, I put forth the very same sentiments—nay, in a great measure, the very same words, which I have employed on previous occasions when this subject was discussed in our columns.

I do not think it virtuous or rational in a man and woman solemnly to swear that they will love and honour each other until death part them. First, because if affection or esteem on either side should afterwards cease (as, alas! we often see it cease), the person who took the marriage-oath has perjured himself; secondly, because I have observed that such an oath, being substituted for the noble and elevating principle of moral obligation, has a tendency to weaken that principle.

You will probably ask me whether I should equally object to a solemn promise to live together during life whatever happens. I do not think this *equally* objectionable; because it is an explicit promise possible to be kept; whereas the oath to love until death may become *impossible* of fulfilment. But still I do not approve even this possible promise; and I will give you the reasons why I do not.

That a man and woman should occupy the same house, and daily enjoy each other's society, so long as such an association gives birth to virtuous feelings, to kindness, to mutual forbearance,

to courtesy, to disinterested affection, I consider right and proper. That they should continue to inhabit the same house and to meet daily, in case such intercourse should give birth to vicious feelings, to dislike, to ill temper, to scolding, to a carelessness of each other's comfort and a want of respect for each other's feelings,—this I consider, *when the two individuals alone are concerned*, neither right nor proper: neither conducive to good order nor to virtue. I do not think it well, therefore, to promise, at all hazards, to live together for life.

Such a view may be offensive to orthodoxy, but surely, surely it is approved by common sense. Ask yourself, sir, who is—who can be the gainer—the man, the woman, or society at large—by two persons living in discord rather than parting in peace, as Abram and Lot did when their herdsmen could not agree. We have temptations enough already to ill humour in the world, without expressly creating them for ourselves; and of all temptations to that worst of petty vices, domestic bickering, can we suppose one more strong or more continually active than a forced association in which the heart has no share? Do not the interests of virtue and good order, then, imperiously demand (as the immortal author of “*Paradise Lost*” argued, in his celebrated work, “*On Divorce*,”) that the law should abstain from perpetuating any association, after it has become a daily source of vice?

If children's welfare is concerned, and that they will be injured by a separation, the case is different. Those who impart existence to sentient beings are, in my view, responsible to them for as much happiness as it is in their power to bestow. The parent voluntarily assumes this greatest of responsibilities; and he who, having so assumed it, trifles with his child's best interests for his own selfish gratification, is, in my eyes, utterly devoid of moral principle; or, at the least, utterly blind to the most sacred duty which a human being can be called to perform. If, therefore, the well-being and future prosperity of the children are to be sacrificed by a separation of the parents, then I would positively object to the separation, however grievous the evil effects of a continued connection might be to the dissentient couple.

Whether the welfare of children is ever promoted by the continuation of an ill-assorted union, is another question; as also in what way they ought to be provided for, where a separation actually takes place.

But to regard, for the moment, the case of the adults alone. You will remark, that it is no question for us to determine whether it is better or more proper that affection, once conceived, should last through life. We might as well sit down to decree whether the sun should shine or be hid under a cloud, or whether the wind should blow a storm or a gentle breeze. We may rejoice when it does so last, and grieve when it does not; but as to legislating about the matter, it is the idlest of absurdities.

But we can determine by law the matter of living together. We may compel a man and woman, though they hate each other as cordially as any of Byron's heroes, to have one common name, one common interest, and (nominally) one common bed and board.—We may invest them with the legal appearance of the closest friends while they are the bitterest enemies. It seems to me that mankind have seldom considered what are the actual advantages of such a proceeding to the individuals and to society. I confess that I do not see what is gained in so unfortunate a situation, by keeping up the appearance when the reality is gone.

I do see the necessity, in such a case, if the man and woman separate, of dividing what property they may possess equally between them; and (while the present monopoly of profitable occupations by men lasts) I also see the expediency, in case the property so divided be not sufficient for the woman's comfortable support, of causing the man to continue to contribute a fair proportion of his earnings towards it. I also see the impropriety, as I said before, that the children, if any there be, should suffer. But I cannot see who is the gainer by obliging two persons to continue in each other's society, when heart-burnings, bickerings, and other vicious results, are to be the consequence.

There are cases where affection ceases on one side and remains on the other. No one can deny that this is an evil, often a grievous one; but I cannot perceive how the law can remedy it, or soften its bitterness, any more than it can legislate away the pain caused by unreturned friendship between persons of the same sex.

You will ask me, perhaps, whether I do not believe that, but for the law, there would be a continual and selfish change indulged, without regard to the feelings or welfare of others. What there might be in the world, viciously trained and circumstanced as so many human beings now are, I know not, though I doubt whether things *could* be much worse than they are now; besides that no human power can legislate for the heart. But if men and women were trained, (as they so easily might!) to be even decently regardful of each other's feelings, may we not assert positively, that no such result could possibly happen? Let me ask each one of your readers, and let each answer to his or her own heart: "Are you indeed bound to those you profess to love and honour by the law *alone*?" Alas! for your chance of happiness, if the answer be, Yes!

Your correspondent speaks of chastity. If he mean to broach the question whether I think it an evil for persons of adult age to remain through life in a state of celibacy, I answer, Yes. If he allude to intercourse with those unfortunate victims of the brutal, yet tolerated vices of man, whom want or false education has reduced almost below the pity of their fellow-creatures, I say I consider such an association one of the worst—perhaps the *very* worst, into which ignorance or passion can betray a young man.—If he simply ask me, whether I think a matrimonial connexion,

once formed, should last till death, I have already answered the question.

If (as Franklin did) he interprets chastity to mean *the regulated and strictly temperate satisfaction, without injury to others, of those desires which are natural to all healthy, adult human beings*, I consider it one of the first of virtues; and one most rarely practised, either by young men or by married persons, even when the latter most scrupulously conform to the letter of the law.

It was to promote such chastity, and to render men and women free agents in the most important act of their lives—it was to encourage them to pause ere they incurred the most sacred of responsibilities—to reflect, before they called young creatures into being, whether they were able, and whether they were prepared, to render the existence they imparted a happy one—it was for these objects (which no one surely will pronounce other than commendable) that I wrote and published “Moral Physiology.” How far the work corresponds to the intention, it is for the public to judge.

As to any sudden abolition of the marriage-law, in the present depraved state of society, it is what I have never recommended, and am not prepared to defend. When it is abolished, it ought, in my opinion, to be replaced by a most carefully drawn up and wisely digested law of *parentage*. That great and immediate benefit would result from at once enabling married women to hold property, I am convinced; and I think such a change in the old, Gothic, antiquated statutes of *Baron and Feme*, will soon be made in this country.

It is very possible that you may still demur to my arguments and dissent from my conclusions. You may think that I am willing to trust too many duties to moral keeping. You may believe, that unless men and women were compelled to the appearance of constancy, the world would be full of heartless levity and unseemly change. I do not think so. I am willing to trust to human nature—(once rationally trained in public schools)—I say not for the performance of *as many* duties as the law can now enforce, but for *infinitely more*; of duties so delicate, that no statute can reach them; of morality so elevated, that no act of legislation can give it birth.

In this, of course, I may be mistaken; but confess that if I am, it is an error on the side of virtue. Confess, that if my anticipations should never be fulfilled, they deserved, at least, to be so.

R. D. O.

REMARKS ON THE FOREGOING.

Husbands and wives *can* love one another; they *ought* to love one another; but if they fail of this duty, what excuse is this for their separating? Should they become adulterers, because they are haters of one another? But we are to expect just such logic, and just such morality, from sceptics in general.

O. B.

NOTE B.

[From the *Free Enquirer* of May 28, 1831.]

MARRIAGE AND PLACEMENT ;

A GREAT PRINCIPLE SUSTAINED AND ILLUSTRATED BY AN IMPORTANT HISTORICAL FACT.

IN the progressive march of improvement, mighty circumstances and great experiments occasionally come upon us, to unlock, as it were, the unresolved secrets of the world, and to cut short the idle speculations of theorists, by the brief and simple demonstrations of reality.

Such a circumstance was the late French Revolution ; and how has it changed the tone of feeling, and the language of the press, in Europe ! Aristocrats had prophesied, that the people, once emancipated from a salutary thralldom, would be monsters ; the emancipation came, and they proved themselves heroes. All the flimsy arguments and nice subtleties of right-divine advocates had been put forth in formidable array ; the abusers of *revolution*, from that talented apostate, Burke, down to those who are now the imbecile retainers of the ex-court at Holyrood, had spoken and written and prophesied of bloodshed, of rapine, of licentiousness : the 26th of July came—the day when law and government were abrogated, and public honour and tranquillity were trusted to the hands of a traduced and a justly incensed people—and how nobly, how unanswerably did that people, in three short days, refute the calumnies of their enemies.

Thus was one accusation against poor human nature replied to ; the accusation which bid us believe, that but for the trammels of law the world would be one vast slaughter-house. I propose to adduce to our readers another great experiment, differing in character indeed from the Paris war of July, yet conveying, like that immortal struggle, a grave lesson ; and refuting, like it, one of the vulgar accusations against our species ; the accusation, namely, which would bid us believe that, but for the restraints of indissoluble marriage, the world would be a universal brothel.

I refer to the present state of society in the island of Hayti. If those there be who shall sneer at what I am about to write, as chiefly regarding a race separated from ours by the paltry circumstance of complexion, let them sneer ; I write not for such.

Ever since the revolution which established the independence of the Haytian republic, a custom has prevailed in the island which is not found elsewhere ; and which has not, so far as I have remarked, attracted that attention from the philosopher and the moralist, which I conceive it most emphatically to deserve. I mean the custom which the inhabitants designate by the word *placement*.

Legal marriage is common in St. Domingo as elsewhere. Prostitution, too, exists there as in other countries. But this institution of *placement* is found nowhere, that I know of, but among the Haytians.

Those who choose to marry, are united, as in other countries, by a priest or magistrate. Those who do not choose to marry, and who equally shrink from the mercenary embrace of prostitution, are (in the phraseology of the island) *placés*; that is, literally translated, *placed*.

The difference between *placement* and marriage is, that the former is entered into without any prescribed form, the latter with the usual ceremonies: the former is dissoluble at a day's warning, the latter is indissoluble except by the vexatious and degrading formalities of divorce; the former is a tacit, social compact, the latter a legal compulsory one; in the former the woman gives up her name and her property; in the latter, she retains both.

Marriage and placement are, in Hayti, equally respectable; or, if there be a difference, it is in favour of placement; and, in effect ten placements take place in the island for one marriage. *Pétion*, the Jefferson of Hayti,* sanctioned the custom by his approval and example. *Boyer*, his successor, the president, did the same;† and by far the largest portion of the respectable inhabitants have imitated their presidents; and are *placed*, not married. The children of the placed have, in every particular, the same legal rights and the same standing as those born in wedlock.

I imagine I hear from the clerical supporters of orthodoxy one general burst of indignation at this sample of national profligacy; at this contemning of the laws of God and man; at this escape from the church's ceremonies and the ecclesiastical blessing. I imagine I hear the question sneeringly put, how long these same *respectable* connexions commonly last, and how many dozen times they are changed in the course of a year.

Gently, my reverend friends! It is natural you should find it wrong, that men and women dispense with your services and curtail your fees, in this matter. But it is neither just nor proper, that because no prayers are said, and no fees paid, you should denounce the custom as a profligate one. Learn (as I did

* It may suffice, in illustration of *Pétion's* character, to quote the touching inscription found on his tomb—"Here lies *Pétion*, who enjoyed for twelve years, absolute power, and during that period, never caused one tear to flow."

† *Boyer's* resolution in this matter is the more remarkable, as he has been urged and pestered to submit to the forms of marriage. *Gregoire*, archbishop of Blois, and who is well known for the perseverance and benevolence with which he has for a long series of years, advocated the cause of the African race, wrote to the president of Hayti in the most urgent terms, pressing upon him the virtue—the necessity, for his salvation—of conforming to the sacrament of marriage. To such a degree did the good old archbishop carry his intermeddling officiousness, that when *Boyer* mildly but firmly declined availing himself of his grace's advice, a rupture was the consequence, greatly to the sorrow of the president, who had ever entertained the greatest respect and affection for his ecclesiastical friend.

the other day from an intelligent French gentleman who had remained some time on the island)—learn, that *although there are ten times as many placed as married, yet there are actually fewer separations among the former than divorces among the latter*. If constancy, then, is to be the criterion of morality, these same profligate unions—that is, unions unprayed-for by the priest and unpaid-for to him—are ten times as moral as the religion-sanctioned institution of marriage.

But this is not all. It is a fact notorious in Hayti, that libertinism is far more common among the married than among the placed. The explanatory cause is easily found. A placement secures to the consenting couple no *legal* right over one another. They remain together, as it were, on good behaviour. Not only positive tyranny or downright viragoism, but petulant peevishness or selfish ill humour, are sufficient causes of separation. As such, they are avoided with sedulous care. The natural consequence is, that the unions are usually happy, and that each being comfortable at home, is not on the search for excitement abroad. In indissoluble marriage, on the contrary, if the parties should happen to disagree, their first jarrings are unchecked by considerations of consequences. A husband may be as tyrannical as to him seems good; he remains a lord and master still; a wife may be as pettish as she pleases; she does not thereby forfeit the rights and privileges of a wife. Thus, ill humour is encouraged by being legalized, and the natural results ensue, alienation of the heart, and sundering of the affections. The wife seeks relief in fashionable dissipation; the husband, perhaps, in the brutalities of a brothel.

But, aside from all explanatory theories, the *fact* is as I have stated it, viz.: that (taking the proportion of each into account) *there are ten legal separations of the married, for one voluntary separation of the placed*. If any one doubts it, let him inquire for himself; and he will doubt no longer.

What say you to that fact, my reverend friends? How consorts it with your favourite theory, that man is a profligate animal, a desperately wicked creature? that, but for your prayers and blessings, the earth would be a scene of licentiousness and excess? that human beings remain together, only because you have helped to tie them? that there is no medium between priestly marriage and unseemly prostitution?

Does this fact open your eyes a little on the real state of things, to which we heterodox spirits venture to look forward? Does it assist in explaining to you how it is that we are so much more willing than you to entrust the most sacred duties to moral rather than legal keeping?

You cannot imagine that a man and a woman, finding themselves suited to each other, should agree, without your interference, to become companions; that he should remove to her plantation, or she to his, as they found it most convenient; that the connection should become known to their friends without the agency of banns, and be respected, even though not ostentatiously announced

in a newspaper. Yet all this happens in Hayti, without any breach of propriety, without any increase of vice ; but, on the contrary, much to the benefit of morality, and the discouragement of prostitution. It happens among the white as well as the coloured population ; and the president of the country gives it his sanction, in his own person.

Do you still ask me—accustomed as you are to consider virtue the offspring of restrictions—do you still ask me, what the checks are that produce and preserve such a state of things ? I reply, good feeling and public opinion. Continual change is held to be disreputable, where sincere and well-founded affection exists, it is not desired ; and as there is no pecuniary inducement in forming a placement, these voluntary unions are seldom ill-assorted.

When our nature is blackened and abused, and when we are told that we are altogether vile and unclean until washed in the consecrated waters of theology, or purified by the searching influence of the law, let us appeal, in its defence, to facts like these.

R. D. O.

REMARKS ON THE FOREGOING.

There is no evidence adduced, that Hayti is in the happy condition here described. But suppose this to be the case, what justification is this for the general state of fornication there prevailing ? This *placement*, this living together without marriage, is FORNICATION, in the proper sense of the term. And my opponent, in advocating it, shows only the looseness of his own moral principles.

O. B.

NOTE C.

[The original letter, of which the following are extracts, was written by one of William Pitt's underlings from England, under date, June 29, 1793 ; that is, about a month after the commencement of the reign of terror in France. It is addressed "*To the President of the Revolutionary Committee, at St. Omer,*" one of the leaders in the bloody tragedy that followed, the atrocities of which are charged, not to foreign treachery, not to the libticide machinations of European courts, but by royalists to French democracy, and by the orthodox to French scepticism !

These extracts appeared originally in the *Free Enquirer* of April 24, 1830.]

R. D. O.

"Your diligence deserves our thanks ; your two expresses arrived this morning at eight o'clock, the duplicate at one o'clock. The plans you last sent are more correct than the former, though not sufficiently distinct. Desire R—— to give you another ; he may be a good engineer, but he is not accurate ; there is a great difference between his and those from Lisle. You are requested to order Webbe to pay the other of Lisle £100 surplus. Arrange as you can with R—— ; don't mind the money. Don't

Q 2

lose sight of your commandant; he is sterling. If he is dubious of detection, let him resign; and do you pay him double of what he receives from the War Office. Make him a present of £500. I do not doubt his zeal from the proof he has shown. My lord desires a direct statement from him of the powder, balls, &c."

"Let Greenwood give his dinners now and then with the select party. Coubourg's plan is sure, unless the fortune of war goes with the Dogs. If so, the plan of the forage must be our last resource, and must take place in every town on the same day. At all events be prepared with all the select, for the 10th or 16th of August.

"The phosphorescent matches will be sufficient, and a hundred may be given to each trusty, without danger, as they lie in the compass of one inch and three quarters circumference for each hundred, by four inches and a half long. We will take care to provide each committee with enough before the time."

"We must bring the assignats more and more into discredit. Refuse those of the republic. Keep up the prices. Let the merchants buy up every article of necessaries. If you can persuade the C—— to purchase up the suet and all candles at any price, make the people pay, even to five livres a pound.

"My lord is thankful for the very masterly manner of Br——. The duke caused his son to be enregistered with yours, the same day. Their pay as cornets goes on.

"Let Chester now and then go to Ardes and to Dunkirk. Pray don't mind money. We hope the assassination business will be carried on with prudence. The parsons in disguise and women are the proper persons. Send 50,000 livres to Rouen and the same to Caen."

"Milner's plan is approved by Pitt, but his late fever will keep him in England some time longer. Streton's son, tell him, will be recalled from Vienna, and shall have the minister's place at Madrid after the war."

"Let no money be spared. My lord desires you will not think of sending or keeping any accounts. He even desires every minute may be destroyed, as they might be dangerous, if found, to all our friends in France; and your probity was so well established in the part you acted for us in Switzerland last year, as well as what you've done for the cause since at St. Omer, as to be a sufficient surety in all negotiating money business."

"Tell Ness he may be sure of a borough in the first vacancy, or next parliament. Adieu.

Your affectionate cousin,

(The signature is in cypher.)

"P. S. Send immediately to Lyons and Grenoble with 150,000 livres. We greatly regret the death of L——; his widow's pension of £600 a year shall be paid to her and son during life. Send them £200 by first occasion. Say to Cobb's wife, her husband was promoted 1st May, by order of Admiral M'Bride. Let Morel be allowed £100 more a month. We hope to occupy the rooms he has fitted up as winter quarters. When you go to Dunkirk, fix with his cousin or him for a safe conveyance for the guineas. We have ready forty thousand for the committee in your direction."

REMARKS ON THE FOREGOING.

In the first place, it remains to be *proved*, that the foregoing document is genuine; in the next place, if it is so, it proves foreign intrigue only in the cases which it specifies; and lastly, it has no manner of concern with the atrocities by me brought into view as sanctioned by the National Assembly, the Legislative Assembly, and the National Convention. Foreign courts may have had their emissaries in France, but this is no excuse for the infernal deeds of the infidel French Jacobins. O. B.

NOTE D.

REMARKS RELATIVE TO THE TENTH LETTER OF MR. OWEN ON THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE BIBLE.

TRINITARIANS admit that Christ was man as well as God; and that, *as a man*, he had a beginning, both in body and mind. But no one thinks of charging them with deism for this.

That the expectation of a messiah *was* general at the time Christ came, is so notorious a fact, that it is not worth the while to enter into debate on the subject with any individual who denies it. It is but to read the writings of those times, to see this—those of Virgil, for instance.

That prophecies like those which relate to Christ should be the cause of their own accomplishment, when many of them were accomplished by his enemies, who were striving to crush his pretensions to the messiahship, is too unreasonable an idea to need refutation.

That the Jews and Christians interpret passages differently which relate to the messiah, is not at all strange, when it is considered that the Jews are determined to reject Jesus as being the one. But here are the predictions themselves, which we can examine as well as they, instead of depending on their interpretation.

The sentence from Weems' Life of Washington, produced by Mr. Owen is shown by its style to have been only designed as a sally of fancy. A wonderful reason this, for rejecting as false the grave, historical part of the account. As to Jefferson's testi-

mony touching the scepticism of Washington, *he* has given *none* such: he did not pretend to be the author of it; nor did Morris pretend that Washington *told* him he did not believe in Christianity. And the statement of Jefferson, that Washington in his public documents spake favourably of Christianity but once, I have amply refuted, by extracts from the documents themselves. That Rev. Mr. Jackson, more than thirty years after the death of Washington, has not chanced to find any of the few surviving scattered individuals who communed with him, (if indeed any are still living,) is about as strong evidence of his scepticism, as that he did not deliver a long Christian valedictory in his dying hour, when he could hardly articulate a syllable on account of his quincy. I have proved positively that he was a professor of religion; that he was a communicant; that he was in the habit of secret prayer, &c., &c.: and I have now only to add, that if *he* cannot be proved to have been a believer in Christianity, *no* man can.

I do not perceive the irrationality of the question proposed by Ethan Allen's daughter to her father. She very naturally concluded that if he would give his real opinion at such a time, and if that opinion was, that infidelity would not do to die by, it would be a *reason* why it should not be confided in at all, and would likewise show that the reasons which her father had urged in its behalf were unsound even in his own estimation. It was therefore the highest rationality, to put this question precisely under the circumstances that she did.

Jefferson might construe that into scepticism which perhaps another would not. As John Adams was a member of a congregational church, he was either a believer in Christianity, or a hypocrite. Should Mr. Owen therefore succeed in proving him to have been a sceptic, he will in so doing likewise prove him to have been a hypocrite; in which case, he would be perfectly welcome to him. Considering, however, the *mistakes* to which Jefferson was liable, and the testimony furnished in Rev. Mr. Whitney's letter, I rest very easy on this point.

Franklin's case will do very well without further defence, while his epitaph remains, and his condemnation of his youthful scepticism retains a place in his memoirs.

My opponent has made rather slim work, in his attempt to substantiate his assertion, that three quarters of the leaders in our revolutionary struggle were sceptics. Ethan Allen was not a leader, unless there were a great many leaders; for he was only a colonel. Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and Patrick Henry, three of the most conspicuous leaders, were decided friends of Christianity. This will not be disputed. Washington and John Adams were communicants in churches. Franklin shows himself to have been a believer in the Bible. And there were many other distinguished leaders, such as Laurens, Gates, Greene, Putnam, Montgomery, Warren, &c., &c., none of whom has a y opponent even attempted to prove to have been sceptics. What then becomes of this assertion?

Nations are composed of individuals; nevertheless, there is a difference between the public and private acts of individuals. There is a difference between exciting a hubbub in the streets on private considerations, and rousing a nation to arms to gain its independence.

To foretel the *particulars* of the destruction of *certain cities*, and to make a *political calculation* of a *general nature*, are very different concerns. Rousseau might have calculated a French Revolution; but he could not have foreseen the September Massacre.—Nor could he have foreseen the *particulars* of the destruction of Babylon and Jerusalem.

I find no necessity for understanding the two-fold prediction of the saviour, relative to the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world, as a blunder. To use language according to custom is no blunder; for custom gives language its meaning.

My opponent's *assertion*, that there is only *presumptive evidence* of the early date of the New Testament, will never balance the *positive evidence* to that effect as given in my ninth and tenth letters on the authenticity of the Bible. But he seems to have forgotten to show, that other ancient history has better evidence of its avowed date.

The fact that the writings of the early opponents of Christianity were burnt, affects not the quotations from them, as contained in the writings of others. Should my letters in this controversy be destroyed, and my opponent's descend to posterity, his quotations from mine would show what I have said in those quotations, as well as if my letters should be preserved. Now, in the quotations made from the writings of the opponents of Christianity, they admit the miracles of Christ, &c.

If it is not said in the Bible, that parchment was as early as the days of Moses, neither is it said to the contrary. But *books* are named thus early; and that is sufficient to show the futility of my opponent's objection to the existence of the Pentateuch at that time. Surely *skins* were in existence then, and *might* have been used in this way, to say the least. "But this is not material."

In the case of *universal* tradition, it must be obvious, that one nation does not derive its ideas from another, because some nations have no communication with one another. The only way in which such tradition could obtain, is that described in the Bible, viz., that mankind sprung from one common source, and thence received similar communications, which they carried with them as they dispersed over the globe. Hence, neither the Jews derived their primeval Bible marvels from the East Indians, nor those Indians theirs from them.

I again ask for the history of the "many inundations" mentioned by my opponent. I have given the history of *the one* mentioned by myself. I deny not that there have been many *partial* inundations. And this will account for the various strata to be seen in particular places. But the extravagant calculations of sceptics as to the length of time necessary for the formation of those

strata, are mere random conjectures; like that of the catholic canon, who supposed that certain volcanic strata must have required fourteen thousand years for their formation, when it was afterwards demonstrated, that two thousand years might have been sufficient. As to the *gradual* change of climate in the polar regions of which my opponent speaks, he seems to forget the *undecayed* carcasses of *elephants* found in the polar *ices*, and the *half-grown* fossilised vegetable remains of those regions.

If the death of Christ is proved by the concessions of the Talmud, his miracles are likewise proved by the same means, as it concedes them likewise.

In the *fourth* century, a division broke out between the eastern and western churches, which became irreconcilable in the ninth, and continues to this day. The eastern or Greek church have *never* acknowledged the authority of the pope, and have had the keeping of the Bible, as well as the catholics. *Before* the division, there was but one church, and that was neither catholic nor Greek; no such distinctions being then known. And from the very first, there have been heretical sects, who have likewise had the Bible. Furthermore, it has been in the hands of its enemies. So that the Apocalyptic Babylon has never had the exclusive charge of it for one moment.

Some six or eight years ago, I read Mosheim in course. It is not to be expected that I should recollect every thing he relates. I had entirely forgotten his remarks on the Athanasian miracle mentioned by my opponent; and from the circumstance, that the latter mentioned but one church historian as noticing it, I inferred that Mosheim did not. I examined the list of emperors and writers, as given in Mosheim's tables; and the result of my examination was as I stated in my tenth letter. But now it appears that Mosheim does notice, and even *admit* the *fact* of the *tongueless talkers*, although he inclines to the opinion, from the circumstance that there were two who could not talk, that the extraction of the tongue was not equally thorough in all their cases, and, therefore, that there was no miracle in the concern. Unless it can be accounted for in this way, a miracle must be admitted, for *the fact* is well established; though it did not occur in the fourth century, as my opponent erroneously asserts, but in the fifth.

To disprove the supernatural occurrences adduced in my tenth, my opponent has produced an additional one! For my part, I cannot see why *one* extraordinary event is untrue, because *another* has happened. His statement, that the vision by him named was more remarkable than any of the cases which I produced, is incorrect. It was by no means to be compared with the trance of Tennent. Besides, it was of a very different nature from almost all the cases named by myself. In those cases there was no chance for nervous deception. His remark, that *some* dreams are not realised, shows only that those dreams are not supernatural; but let sceptics treat them as they may, mankind at large will believe, that dreams so strikingly fulfil!

as were those under consideration, were nothing less than revelation.

He continues still to evade, in the case of the barbarous customs of the heathen, and on the subject of utility. I have shown that nothing but Christianity puts an end to those customs; and that some of them are even right, if utility is the test of right and wrong. He then goes on to talking of irrelevancies, and of heathen imperfections, &c. instead of showing that any thing besides Christianity is a remedy for those imperfections, or that those imperfections are not useful.

Were he more conversant with the book which he is striving to overthrow, he would know that the command to shed the blood of the murderer was originally a patriarchal, not a Mosaical one. (See Genesis, chap. ix., ver. 6.)

To call things by their right names; to say that a man is a thief who steals, is not that kind of judging which the saviour condemned. Neither is it such judging, for me to say of my opponent, that he wilfully misrepresented Watson, when, with his words before his eyes, he charged him with having given an incorrect idea of the means by which Christianity was spread, and of the holy lives of its professors. He knew that Watson spake of the first centuries; and he knew, too, that what he said was sustained by fact. And though Tacitus, in general terms, speaks against the Christians, he does not specify a single crime of which they were guilty. Pliny is more explicit, and shows their great fault, the fault for which they were even punished, to have been, *faithfulness to their religion, even unto death*. They would not invoke *the gods*; they would not supplicate the *emperor's image*; and therefore the "impartial Tacitus" and Pliny must needs call them pestilent, obstinate, and criminal; and sceptics must needs join with them in the unjust, unmanly, and cruel accusation.

When *Mormonism* shall have won the most enlightened nations of the earth to its standard, and stood the test of opposition for eighteen hundred years, it will then be time to compare it with Christianity. And here I would say, that, whatever may be the case in France and Germany with regard to popery, evangelical religion in these countries is rising.

That Seneca and Pliny must have been witnesses of the darkness of the passion, is an unauthorised assertion. That they would designedly forbear to notice it, is what might be expected, confirming, as it did, the divine mission of Christ.

The admission of the Apocrypha by catholics, is no reason why it should be forced upon protestants. We have reasons to us satisfactory, for its rejection; and my opponent ought better to understand the rules of discussion, than to attempt to press us with authority which we do not admit. Let him talk to catholics of Esdras and Tobit, and Bel and the Dragon, and all the rest; but not to us. Where then is his proof, that the Bible was lost and found again? Where too is his proof, that witchcraft is?

possible? and where the passage which says, that Moses wrote an account of his own death?

He insinuates that the Christian philosophers, mentioned in my tenth, had *secret doubts*. How does he know this, if those doubts were *secret*? Besides, this is to insinuate that they were hypocrites; for they *professed to believe*. The deism of Bacon, of which he spake, consisted no doubt in his saying, that he dared die with no other thoughts than those of the Christian religion; that of Newton, in his proving that Daniel's weeks were a prediction of the messiah, and were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Milton and Locke might have had peculiar views of the *doctrines* of the Bible; but the "Paradise Lost" of the one, and the declaration of the other, that the Bible contains no mixture of error, are amply sufficient for ever to shield their reputation from the charge of scepticism. Here I would just ask my opponent in *what* sense every one will admit that this universal frame has a mind. Order, that comes by chance, be it ever so regular, has no mind concerned in it.

It is much easier for sceptics to rave, when pressed with the immorality of their leaders, than to meet the charge. But all their raving will never disprove this charge. My opponent can find my authority for my statements on this point in Horne, and various other writers. A burnt child dreads the fire; and *therefore* the recent French revolutionists did not run into it, as the former ones did. But no thanks to infidelity for this.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

. I shall not lengthen, by a single line, a discussion already too voluminous, except to furnish my authority, where *facts* are disputed:

"In the eighth century there arose a difference between the eastern and western churches, which, in the course of about two centuries and a half, ended in a total separation."—*British Encyclopædia*, republished by Nicholson, 3rd edit., art. GREEK CHURCH.

As no authority, except the vague assertion, unsustained by a shadow of evidence, of Christian apologists ("Horne and other writers,") is furnished in support of the charges brought against such men as Hume and Voltaire, no authority is due from me in reply. It is to be found in abundance in their biographies.

R. D. O.

Albany, November 12, 1831.

P.S. I am now enabled to furnish two further documents relative to the private opinions of distinguished republicans. One is, an extract from a sermon delivered on the 23rd October last by the Rev. Dr. Wilson, a clergyman of Albany, and reputed to be a man of as much zeal and learning as any in the city; a sermon, I may incidentally remark, in which Dr. W. says, in speaking of the framing of the Constitution of the United States, that "the proceedings as published by Thompson, the secretary, show, that the

question was gravely debated in Congress whether God should be in the Constitution or not, and after solemn debate he was deliberately voted out of it;" that "the men whose arguments swayed to vote God out of the Constitution, to declare that there should be no religious test, and that Congress should make no law to establish religion, were atheists in principle; that among all our presidents from Washington downward, not one was a professor of religion, at least not of more than unitarianism;* that among all the governors of Pennsylvania and New-York only two of the former and one of the latter were professors of religion, &c." In this sermon, as reported in the Daily Advertiser of this city (of the 29th October last) occurs the following paragraph:

"Washington was a man of valour and wisdom. He was esteemed by the whole world as a great and good man, but he was not a professor of religion, at least not till after he was president. When the Congress sat in Philadelphia, President Washington attended the episcopal church. *The rector, Dr. Abercrombie, has told me, that on the days when the sacrament of the Lord's supper was to be administered, Washington's custom was to rise, just before the ceremony commenced, and to walk out of church.* This became a subject of remark in the congregation, as setting a bad example. At length the doctor undertook to speak of it, with a direct allusion to the president. Washington was heard afterwards to remark, that *this was the first time a clergyman had thus preached to him, and that he would henceforth neither trouble the doctor nor his congregation on such occasions.* And ever after that, upon communion days, he absented himself altogether from the church."

As this important paragraph, being only from a newspaper report of a sermon, could hardly be considered authentic, I myself called, accompanied by a gentleman of this city, on Dr. Wilson, this afternoon. After giving my name, and stating the object of my visit, I read to the doctor, at his request, the above paragraph. When I had completed, he said: "I endorse every word of that." He further added: "As I conceive that truth is truth, whether it makes for or against us, I will not conceal from you any information on this subject, even such as I have not yet given to the public. At the close of our conversation on the subject, Dr. Abercrombie's emphatic expression was, for I well remember the very words: '*Sir, Washington was a deist!*' Now," continued Dr. Wilson, "I have diligently perused every line that Washington ever gave to the public, and I do not find one expression in which he pledges himself as a professor of Christianity. I think any man who will candidly do as I have done, will come to the conclusion

* John Adams and his son, he thinks, were unitarians; he inquired himself, he said, of Madison what were his opinions on religion, and Madison "evaded any expression whatever of his religious faith;" of Monroe's opinions, he says, he knows little, except that he never heard of any religious profession from him: and Jackson, he believes, though not a regular professor either, is the most religious president we have ever had.

that he was a deist, and nothing more. I do not take upon myself to say positively that he was, but that is my opinion."

Dr. Abercrombie, the associate of Bishop White in the pastoral care of Christ's Church in Philadelphia, is now alive, to corroborate the statement of his brother clergyman. So much for WASHINGTON, of whom you say, if he cannot be proved a Christian, no human being can.

The second fact I have to adduce regards our late respected and venerable president MONROE. The Rev. Dr. Matthews of New-York caused it to be intimated to Mr. Monroe, when on his death-bed, that he should be pleased to attend him in his professional capacity. Monroe declined, in these remarkable words: "It is unnecessary. *If there be a God, he is a merciful one.*"

This anecdote is from the mouth of a respectable and well-known orthodox divine of this city, who openly repeated it in one of the principal bookstores here, about a month since. He had it a few days previously from Dr. Matthews himself. This gentleman prefaced it by saying "he had heard a circumstance regarding Monroe's death which made his blood run cold;" and concluded by remarking "that he had always thought Monroe an easy sort of an infidel." Dr. Matthews is on the spot, to testify, if necessary, to the truth of the circumstance in question.

The admissions of opponents are, as you once reminded me, "so much pure gold." I therefore the more willingly adduce so unquestionable authority.

R. D. O.

. In relation to the time when the schism between the eastern and western churches commenced, I offer the following extracts from that best of authorities on church history, Mosheim.

O. B.

"Constantine the Great, by removing the seat of the empire to Byzantium, and building the city of Constantinople, raised up, in the bishop of this new metropolis, a formidable rival to the Roman pontiff, and a bulwark which menaced a vigorous opposition to his growing authority. For, as the emperor, in order to render Constantinople a second Rome, enriched it with all the rights and privileges, honours and ornaments, of the ancient capital of the world; so its bishop, measuring his own dignity and rank by the magnificence of the new city, and its eminence as the august residence of the emperor, assumed an equal degree of dignity with the bishop of Rome, and claimed a superiority over all the rest of the episcopal order. Nor did the emperors disapprove of these high pretensions, since they considered their own dignity as connected, in a certain measure, with that of the bishop of their imperial city. Accordingly, in a council held at Constantinople in the year 381, by the authority of Theodosius the Great, the bishop of that city was, during the absence of the bishop of Alexandria, and against the consent of the Roman prelate, placed,

by the third canon of that council, in the first rank after the bishop of Rome, and consequently above those of Alexandria and Antioch. Nectarius was the first bishop who enjoyed these new honours accumulated upon the see of Constantinople. His successors, the celebrated John Chrysostom, extended still further the privileges of that see, and submitted to its jurisdiction all Thrace, Asia, and Pontus; nor were the succeeding bishops of that imperial city destitute of a fervent zeal to augment their privileges, and to extend their dominion.

"This sudden revolution in the ecclesiastical government, and this unexpected promotion of the bishop of Byzantium to a higher rank, to the detriment of other prelates of the first eminence in the church, were productive of the most disagreeable effects. For this promotion not only filled the bishops of Alexandria with the bitterest aversion to those of Constantinople, but also excited those deplorable contentions and disputes between these latter and the Roman pontiffs, which were carried on for many ages, with such various success, and concluded, at length, in the entire separation of the Latin and Greek churches."

With regard to the Postscript of Mr. Owen from Albany, I have to observe, that I have dispatched three letters to the Rev. Dr. Wilson, requesting him to give the *names* of those *atheists* whose arguments swayed the Convention that formed the Constitution of the United States to vote the name of God out of it; but no answer have I succeeded in getting from him. This assertion of the doctor must therefore pass for an unsustained one. Indeed, in the very next breath, in the sermon under consideration, he contradicts it by saying, that some of those men were deists. So much for his testimony on this point. Besides, the fact that a religious *test* is excluded from the Constitution, is no proof that its framers were not even Christians. I have received a letter from Rev. Dr. Abercrombie; but as he wishes not to appear before the public in print, I shall not insert it. I will only say, that he denies all recollection of having told Rev. Dr. Wilson that Washington was a deist, and says it was evident he was a professing Christian, though he did not commune in his church. The following additional testimony relative to the religious character of Washington I have received from Rev. Mr. Jackson of Alexandria:

Alexandria, Nov. 22, 1831.

I have heard my grandfather, the Rev. Lee Massey, who was rector of Pohick Church, near Mount Vernon, say, that General Washington was a communicant in his church. The above information was given in answer to a question after returning from Pohick Church, where I occupied the general's pew. The substance of my grandfather's reply was, that he (the general) was a communicant, and that a better Christian never lived or died.

MARGARET M. GREER.

DEAR SIR,

Your letter found me in the bustle of changing my residence. I have however given it my attention. The above certificate is the best information I can at present obtain, and ought to be sufficient. Mrs. Greer is a very respectable lady, and may be depended upon. A daughter of the Rev. Mr. Massey is expected in town, from whom I have the hope of obtaining some of General Washington's letters.

The parish of Pohick has not had a rector, I believe, since the general's death. He afterwards attended in Alexandria. This accounts for the church records not giving the evidence which you desire.

I beg you will make use of me again, should the case require.

Yours very respectfully,

WILLIAM JACKSON.

Mr. Origen Bachelier, New-York.

Alexandria, Dec. 7, 1831

DEAR SIR,

I am sorry, after so long a delay in replying to your last, that it is not in my power to communicate something decisive in reference to General Washington's church membership. The branch of the family from whom I hoped to obtain information, are yet absent from Mount Vernon on account of sickness, and I now begin to think it doubtful whether they will be there this winter. Nor can I find any old person who ever communed with him, though not one expresses any doubt on the subject. It may seem strange that none can certify to the fact; but it is not difficult to account for, when we remember, that the parish to which he belonged has not had a rector for, perhaps, thirty years; that the number of communicants in the episcopal churches after the revolution was very small, and those probably, in general, persons advanced in years; and further, that none of the church records can be found. All these circumstances render it exceedingly difficult to obtain such testimony as is desirable. Universal tradition in the families of those whose parents or friends were acquainted with the general, is, that he was a regular communicant.

I may say again, that all his relations in this part of the country are decidedly of opinion that he was a professed and real Christian, and in full standing as a member of the protestant episcopal church. I regret that the pains I have taken to gain satisfactory evidence has not been more successful, though I think it ought and will be deemed sufficient by all but such as are determined to believe, that they have the sanction of his great name on the side of infidelity.

Wishing you may be more successful in some other quarter,

With respect yours,

WILLIAM JACKSON.

Mr Origen Bachelier, New-York.

With regard to the statement relative to Monroe, I have to observe, that I have called on Rev. Dr. Matthews, who informs me that he was never at all acquainted with him ; that he knew nothing of his illness till he heard of his death ; that he never made to him a tender of his professional services ; and that, so far as relates to himself, the whole story is a fabrication. I have likewise called on S. L. Gouverneur, the post-master of this city, and son-in-law of Mr. Monroe, in whose house he died, who informs me that there is *no foundation* for the foregoing story, relative to *any* clergyman ; that *no* one made any tender of his services ; that *no* one was refused ; that his father-in-law had the highest respect for Christianity, considering it to be of immense benefit to society ; and that he gave no reason for supposing that he was sceptical.

In view of the foregoing, the reader will see what dependence is to be placed on the pretensions and assertions of sceptics with regard to the religious opinions of our other distinguished men. Could the inquiry be made, we have now fair grounds for concluding, that it would result in their cases as it has resulted in those now under consideration. I have but to add by way of conclusion, that it appears by the Evangelist, that Rev. Dr. Wilson is an opposer of revivals of religion. This circumstance will have its proper weight with the public, whenever they think of his concessions to Mr. Owen.

ORIGEN BACHELER.

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